

**GREAT NORTHERN HOTEL
BUNDORAN, CO DONEGAL**

July 3 – 6, 2007

**Tuesday 3 July
Morning Session**

Opening of Conference

9.30 – 11.30

Playing of DVD of Irish Ferries March

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates, you are all very welcome to Bundoran on the occasion of our Biennial Conference. I know that the hall is a bit cramped but we are hoping that you will at least find it intimate.

As a courtesy, as always, we will ask people to check before we get proceedings underway that mobile phones are switched off or at least switched to the silent mode and we would ask people if they are leaving the hall to, as a courtesy to speakers, not to engage in conversation until you are outside.

We are going to get proceedings underway by inviting a number of people to issue addresses of welcome. I call firstly on the Chairperson of Bundoran Urban District Council, Mr Billy Mulherne, to address. Billy, you are very welcome.

Mr Billy Mulherne, Chairperson of Bundoran Urban Council

Mr President, General Secretary, ladies, Gents, delegates – Cead Mile Failte. I would like to welcome you all to Bundoran here and to the Great Northern Hotel and the people of Bundoran Council. I am a wee bit nervous. I have just got into politics and this is my first duty as Chairperson of Bundoran Council.

I think, if I remember, that this is the third conference and there has been a lot of changes in Bundoran here. I hope you enjoy it. We have a load of amenities here for you – water facilities and if the weather changes I hope you can enjoy some of them.

The conference itself is a great asset to Bundoran, to the place of Bundoran and the people of Bundoran and it advertises Bundoran. We are grateful to see you here and we hope you have a wonderful time. I am not going to keep you as I am a wee bit nervous, ok. So, that is all I am going to say – welcome to Bundoran here and I hope you have a great time.

I now invite PJ Hannon from the Letterkenny Trades Council to address Conference.

PJ Hannon, Letterkenny Trades Council

Mr President, fellow delegates, distinguished guests and observers, I am both pleased and honoured to welcome you to Bundoran today to Delegate Conference 07, on behalf of Letterkenny Trades Council. I hope you all, each and everyone of you, especially all of you in the North West, where there is a long and proud tradition of trade unionism. This conference is an important part of the democratic process, the traditions and procedures of the trade union movement. It allows us as representatives to reflect upon, discuss, debate and highlight issues to our members. These issues are clearly outlined in the range of motions on the agenda of the conference.

We live in times of economic prosperity – so called full employment, strong immigration, strong services employment and high levels of productivity. The public finances are in a very good state of health. However, all is not well in Irish society. The border, the midlands and the west suffer huge imbalances in the distribution of wealth and resources. These areas suffer high unemployment – 14 per cent here in Donegal, lack of infrastructural development, non existent public transport service. Rural communities are at a particular disadvantage due to geographical, social and economic isolation. These imbalances are caused by a lack of political drive. This is a challenge to us all as trade unionists – a challenge I am sure we will face with solidarity and commitment from the members and their communities.

I was delighted to see the booklet on the Congress Centres Network in the delegates' pack here today. These centres are the local public face of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. They bond local small communities who feel isolated, disadvantaged and neglected to a strong national fellowship of workers. We should not underestimate this bond as the users of our centres are our grassroots of future trade unionists. Each centre is unique and provides a range of services which are been expanded yearly. A prime example of this is the centre in Letterkenny where we now provide specialist one to one information on entitlements to British pensions. To date this service alone has attracted 1500 visitors to our centre seeking information on entitlement to a possible British retirement pension. We have secured repayments on pension entitlement for many people to the tune of 250,000 sterling. I would encourage Congress to further support and utilise the centres and their community linkages. I would also

like to thank Congress and particular to thank Kathleen McCann for all her support and guidance. Finally, Mr President and delegates I wish you a successful and enjoyable conference and I hope that you all take the time out to savour the delights of Donegal and the surroundings areas - thank you very much ladies and gentlemen.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates I now ask Hugh McConville from the Sister Trades Council in the North West Sligo Trades Council to address conference. Hugh your very welcome.

Hugh Mc Conville, Sligo Trades Council Chairperson

Thank you Mr President and I would like to join with PJ in welcoming delegates to the North West and I would also like to thank PJ for the support that he gave us at the Irish Ferries march. We had a very successful Irish Ferries march in Sligo where nearly 3,000 people took to the streets and with the support of our colleagues and other Trades Councils, like PJ, like people in Mayo, Roscommon and Leitrim that this was such a success. I would also like to reiterate what PJ was saying about the importance of local Trade's Councils the local trade's centres. These are difficult times, there are changing times and the roles of the local Trade's Councils are changing. For example, in Sligo a couple of years ago we ran three open centres we now only have one. We have struggled for a number of years under a huge debt because of the disperse population we have in this area running these centres are a huge strain on our resources. But, we grow we develop, for example, now in Sligo we have a number of exciting projects on which we have been working very closely with our colleagues in the Fermanagh Trades Council and we have had very exciting cross boarder IT training projects. We also work with the Fermanagh Trades Council and we have got resources to employ a Polish worker to work as an outreach worker for workers from Eastern Europe and other non national countries. Our remaining centre in Manorhamilton is very successful and again with our colleagues in Fermanagh we have developed a community media project there which allows isolated communities use the media and learn how to express themselves and meet the challenges. We also are, with the help of Congress, piloting a pay learning leave project which we will be talking about later on. But these are all the exciting challenges that we can take up. There is so much other work that we can do as Trade Councils - can do and need to do because the structure, if you like of the trade union movement can't get to do. For example, in Sligo town there are over 2.5 people employed in distribution on a part time or full time basis and most of these are young people, most of these people are unorganised. So there's an important role for Trades Councils. But one of the crises that we are facing, and I won't detain you too much longer, but I just would like point this out to you. One of the crises that we are facing is they are all young men and women like me and PJ. Well PJ is probably younger than I am. And we desperately,

desperately, desperately need to address the whole issue of getting young people involved. It's very serious. I mean in Sligo we'd be even glad to get young people in their forties and fifties involved. But joking apart we would nearly have to abound the work we are doing or most of the work we are doing now to refocus our efforts on attracting and getting young people involved. Because if we don't do that in ten years time when we welcome you back to Bundoran possibly we'll be looking at a lot bigger, a diminished pool of Trades Councils if we don't address that issue.

So again I would like to welcome you all, I see a lot of familiar faces, welcome you all back to Bundoran. I hope you will be better behaved than last time you were here. You might have got older and wiser since then, so thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much Hugh.

Destination North West have been a great assistance to the Congress and Secretariat of Congress in organising this conference and sponsoring some of the events and I'd like to call on Paul McLoone, my brother, as a representative from Destination North West to extend a welcome to you. You can give him a round of applause.

Paul McLoone, Destination North West

Hopefully, delegates you'll excuse me as the one person will not use the term 'Mr President'. And Peter above all people, well, I think some of his family are here, but he does know about intimate relations in Bundoran from his young days. Or so he would like us to believe.

Well, firstly I want to welcome you. My day job is with Failte Ireland North West, and on behalf of the Tourism Board here in the Republic of Ireland I want to welcome you all to Bundoran and to the broader area. Also, in another role I chair a program called "Destination North West". What "Destination North West" is about is that, to develop the economy of this region, tourism in this region, it cannot be done without our colleagues in Northern Ireland. So "Destination North West" I think you will see much more of this into the future – in how we develop enterprise, education and other sectors in this region, it will be through cooperation. I also work in a sector – and I talked to many of the hotels, that the workforce in many hotels in the North West and perhaps even more so in other regions, 30 - 40% are non-nationals and how we embrace that workforce is very important. How we deal with it as enterprising and for you as trade unionists it is very important. I know a lot of the workforce still feel a bit out of the Irish culture and our welcome must be a lot stronger. So, I think in your conference I would like you to touch on that issue because it is the way forward. We work in a sector

where the tradition of the welcome is very strong and the Irish welcome would be given by people from other countries. I admire the commitment from a lot of these workers, especially here in Bundoran actually, and people visiting this area feel no different from the welcome they receive from the Irish people or people from Poland or other countries. So this is something that all of us need to embrace.

I want to welcome, actually, on the issue of cooperation, the manager of "Destination North West" who is here – his name is Martin Donnelly. He is in the corner. I am a Donegal man, Martin is from Tyrone, and what I have to say to Martin is that the 2.15, the 1.7 is taking cross border cooperation to the limit. 2.8 to 1.9 but not that one.

But as I say to you, I just want to welcome you here on behalf of the cross border project. If you are getting a chance there are beautiful places in Fermanagh that are only about 40 minutes from here, like Marble Arch caves, Narva, the woods just outside of Belleke where you have a total view over all of Lough Erne, Yeats grave, Lissadale House, 3 minutes up the road or a bus to Donegal Town – to give you a flavour. It is right to sell this region as a cross border cooperative – and that is just giving you some of the attractions here.

I wish you very well with your conference. I hope that you, as I think it was Hugh said, that you do behave. I would appeal to just as much as I did the last time. And on behalf of Bundoran people, because I know they like everyone to say this, would you spend as much money as possible in Bundoran.

Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, can I on your behalf extend our thanks to all of the speakers for their warm welcome to all of us to Donegal and join with them in hoping that the weather improves significantly, particularly for tomorrow afternoon. Thanks very much to all of you.

Delegates, before inviting Michael Sharpe to introduce the Standing Orders Committee Reports, I would like to nominate both the Tellers and the Scrutineers as I understand that there may be a few issues that may have to be dealt with arising out of the Standing Orders Committee Reports. With agreement can I propose the following people as Tellers: George Mabury from PSEU, Noel Pocock, SIPTU, John Bowe, Mandate, Kate Varley, IBOA, Paddy Mackell, GSU and John Bolger, ATGWU. Are those nominations as Tellers agreed? Agreed. Thank you very much.

And the Scrutineers – Frank Barry, AMICUS, Billy Henneghan from PSEU, Declan Glynn, TUI, Theresa Dywer, CPSU, Brian Byrd, SIPTU and Arthur Hall, TEEU. Are those nominations agreed? Agreed.

We will make arrangements with the Secretariat to get the two groups together at some stage.

Can I now call on Michael Sharp, the Chairperson of the Standing Orders Committee to move adoption of Report No 1.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee

Thanks President, Michael Sharp, Chair of Standing Orders Committee moving first the Standing Orders Report No 1 which is at the back of your agenda document. I will go through the various paragraphs.

Paragraph 1 deals with the times of the sessions, paragraph 2 indicates nominations for the officer positions. We have only received one nomination for President – that of Patricia McKeown, therefore she is unopposed. And there is only one nomination for the position of Treasurer, Joe O'Flynn is therefore deemed elected. Those people are deemed elected unopposed.

Paragraph 3 – three persons are nominated for the two Vice President's positions. It is noted that Congress constitution requires at least one woman and therefore since only one woman, Patricia King has been nominated, she is deemed elected. But there will be an election between the other two candidates.

Paragraph 4 recognises that one of those candidates is also a candidate for the Executive Council and therefore if the election of Vice President results in him being elected then he will automatically obviously take the place on the Executive Council and there would be no need for his name to go forward in any Executive Council election.

The election of the ordinary members of the Executive Council as is normal will, according to Standing Orders Report No 1, proceed in the normal way. There will be more about that in Standing Orders Report No 2.

Paragraph 6 – we have two nominations for the Trades Council seat therefore there will be an election for that position.

Paragraph 7 – there are seven nominations for the Standing Orders Committee and there are seven places on that committee. However, of that seven its five members of the committee and two substitutes so there has to be an election to rank the nominees.

Paragraph 8 – five members of the Congress Appeals Board – again the filling of the two remaining vacancies is a matter for the Executive Council if there aren't enough people for the quota.

Paragraph 9 deals with the distribution of ballot papers – it's the same as any other conference. We would ask you to cooperate with the Congress staff if you can.

Paragraph 10 deals with the various motions and amendments. We have looked at the various motions and amendments.

Paragraph 11 – the Executive Council asked the Standing Orders Committee when we were doing the agenda to look at some possible composites. We identified a number of composites. Contact was made with the nominating unions and there are three composite motions on the agenda at points which you will see and we are recommending that each of the individual unions who put in the original motion would have the same speaking rights in relation to those composite. It is still their own motion.

Paragraph 13 – the remaining motions and amendments on the agenda are in order but again there is a point in relation to one of those, sorry Paragraph 12, is Motion 27 from the TUI. Motion 27 from the TUI on Conditions of Service has been ruled out of order in line with precedent and established practice at previous conferences. Motion 27 deals with conditions of service arising out of partnership agreements in the Republic of Ireland and Congress decided quite some time ago that matters relating to those agreements are the property of Special Delegate Conferences and therefore the Standing Orders Committee is unanimously of the view that a motion, as in Motion 27, could only be tabled at a Special Delegate Conference and therefore it is out of order at this conference and we are ruling it so.

Paragraph 14 deals with Suspension of Standing Orders. Again, this is standard practice as is paragraph 15, paragraph 16 the number of address and paragraph 17 the number of guest speakers.

So, I move Standing Orders Committee Report No 1.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much Michael. Any speakers before I put that proposition? Jim Dorney.

Jim Dorney, Teachers Union of Ireland

Morning colleagues. Jim Dorney, Teachers Union of Ireland. As the Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee has outlined to you, Standing Orders

Committee has seen fit to rule Motion 27 from our union out of order. You will find Motion 27 set out in your agenda, and what it effectively says is that we do not agree that everybody in this movement should vote on the conditions of service of selected groups. We do not agree that it is fair or reasonable. That civil servants should vote on the conditions of teachers of which they know nothing or that teachers should vote on the conditions of service of civil servants about which we know nothing.

The question arises not as to whether I believe that to be a very reasonable proposition but I don't ask you to agree with me. What ask is that you grant the right to be heard at this, which is the ruling body, of the trade union movement. And I would like to say to you why I want you to do that. The Chairman said that this is proper to a Special Delegate Conference on pay. But I put it to you colleagues that at the Biennial Delegate Conference 2005 we had precisely that motion ruled out of order on the basis that it would be taken at a Special Delegate Conference on pay. But what happened? There was no Special Delegate Conference on pay at which we could have our view. We were denied the right to put it to you, the delegates, for decision and that is wrong, irrespective of what you say. The power in this movement resides with the delegates, it should be used by the delegates and all we ask is that you the delegates decide and give us the right to be heard.

If that, my friends, wasn't bad enough – we had the same motion again in 2003 and that was ruled in order to a Special Delegate Conference. But yet we are no further advanced four years later. Now, we all have problems but I'm putting our problems to you. I think they are as much your problems as our problems because basically what we are talking about is freedom, democracy and the right to be heard at Special Delegate Conferences. At the moment, I will just put it to you, at the moment my union does not know whether there will be a Special Delegate Conference on pay, certainly there wasn't on the last occasion. We do not know, we do not know,

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Jim, just a second, could I ask that the meeting that is taking over here on my left – that you might meet outside, so that Jim can proceed and make his point. You continue, thanks.

Jim Dorney, Teachers Union of Ireland

We do not know either, and I am not making this up, there are genuine problems and if you consider them I am sure you will agree with me. We do not know when an invitation comes from Bertie Aherne to our President to engage in a further national agreement. My experience has been is that the movement says we will or we won't. I have never seen an amendment taken to it and we are not precisely clear if an amendment will be taken to it, because on a previous

occasion it was put to me what do you want to do – insult the Taoiseach and put conditions on his invitation. Well, if you want it from me straight – yes that's what I want. I don't want to go, as I see there are other speakers here, I don't want to go unduly long but I say to you, heartfelt, please support us. Give us the right to be heard. That is the tradition of our movement and I ask you to do that for us. Thank you so much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

We have a number of other speakers – John is this on the same point. Ok.

John White, Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

President, I wish to second the motion proposed by Jim Dorney. First of all I want to say that it is a great honour to be addressing this conference though not necessarily on a Standing Orders motion but it is the first Congress for eight years since the ASTI has been participating in the Biennial Delegate Conference and I want to say on behalf of our 17,000 members, President, that we are delighted to be here.

President, as Jim has said, the essence of this is that if there is to be a new national program and of course the changes are that there may well be, that we need some kind of model which allows for a cost of living increase, but also addresses the whole issue of modernisation, which of course does need to be addressed. Every group and every organisation and every industry knows that it has to change with the changing times but we need a new mechanism to deal with the modernisation and that would be a mechanism which would allow for parameters to be dealt with within each sector at a local level. For example, my union finds itself in a position whereby we opposed the last national agreement in a ballot of members but we find ourselves now, and we will find ourselves, for much of the next year, constrained to make changes in matters that perhaps our members are very concerned about. But is part of the agreement which they opposed to implement those changes. Now there are profound changes taking place in every education system in Western Europe. Society is changing so much that the education systems do need to change but I think that the change has to be in a way that brings those who are effecting the change along with them and the current mechanism we have, I think, is not doing that President. So I ask this conference to support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, is this on the same point?

Edward Matthews, Irish Nurses Organisation

President, colleagues, Edward Matthews, Irish Nurses Organisation supporting the TUI. Rather than debating the substantive motion, I would echo the comments made quite ably and more eloquently I am sure that I could, by my colleague earlier, the point I wish to make is in relation to having the debate and I do think that this debate needs to occur and it was outlined that debate has not been had. I think in an effort to achieve fairness and as an essential prerequisite to the efficient functioning of our national agreements, I think it is absolutely essential that this motion go to the floor. You may agree with it, you may not and I would urge you to debate it but we must have the opportunity to debate it. Thank you very much colleagues.

Mike Jennings, Irish Federation of University Teachers

Chairman, Mike Jennings, Irish Federation of University Teachers speaking in favour of the TUI position under Standing Orders Report. Could I just ask delegates if you read the text of Motion 27, I find it very difficult to believe that anybody in turn have difficulties with it, because what it asks is that the Congress notes the difficulties and takes account of the difficulties of member trade unions in a negotiation. And it is by way of a negotiating brief for our negotiators if there is to be another national agreement and one way or the other whether confined to the public sector or across the board there will be further national agreements. Now I am prepared to accept, and I can understand the logic of Standing Orders in relation to the second half of the proposal that it could be deemed to pre-empt the outcome of the debate at a time more appropriate for that debate, but as Jim Dorney has said the reality is that we will probably get a choice to enter into talks or not enter into talks and we do need to send a clear signal now about what the parameters are and what are the reasonable parameters.

I come from the school of trade unionism that believes that no matter what the problem is that management is always to blame and if they aren't to blame you find a way to make them to blame. It's not a very difficult task for this one. Because it is important that I take it that all of my colleague speakers taking this position on Motion 27, do not regard Standing Orders Committee as being the opposition. We do not regard Congress as being the problem. The problem for us is the opportunistic, insensitive and crude position taken by the various managements in the public sector in imposing action plans on our members on an individual divide and rule basis and putting them up against the wall and telling them if you don't accept these action plans you don't even get your basic terms of the national wage agreements. That cannot be right.

I also believe that it is counterproductive even from management's point because if they didn't have the arm twisting weapon that they currently have, the sort of action plans that we would negotiate in the public sector might be more imaginative, might actually conform more to the individual sectors of the public sector and would certainly be more supported by our members, rather than drawing up five people outside and imposed without any knowledge or sensitivity,

and I am speaking obviously in this case in particular in the area of higher education where we are living under action plans which were clearly drawn up by people who don't have the first degree of understanding of the impact of those action plans on the sector. And can I just say in keeping with the ethos of Congress, and in particular with the ethos of this particular conference, that we should look at this debate as one aspiring to unity and diversity – in other words that we do accept that there are differences, we do accept that there are different problems, but the purpose of Congress is to provide a framework to support delegates. It is not just one for all, its all for one. And the all for one means that we recognise that there are specific difficulties in those sectors. The job of Congress is to help colleagues in those sectors – not to impose a model on them which forces them to march in line to a step dictated by our opposition. I hope you will support their position. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, we have notice of two other speakers – John Douglas and Larry Broderick. John.

John Douglas, MANDATE

Thank you Mr President. John Douglas, MANDATE trade union speaking on Standing Orders Report No 1. There are a number of motions within the agenda which are on pay and conditions if you read through them. Low pay is being dealt with, extra public holidays being dealt with, which probably if you use the logic of Standing Orders before should be all put back to a Special Conference in the Republic of Ireland to discuss those issues. But they are being debated here today by our brothers and sisters, North and South. I think that is a healthy development that everybody in the trade union movement in the island of Ireland has an opportunity to debate the shape of industrial relations going forward. We speak about an All Ireland economy; I think we should have an All Ireland trade union movement and that the debate on Motion 27 should be allowed. Heretofore, it has been custom and practice to refer such matters back to Special Conferences but ultimately, the deciding body within the Irish trade union movement is this BDC, and I believe a healthy debate should ensue, whether you agree or disagree with Motion 27, let's have the debate and let's have some free speech. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Larry, then I am going to ask Michael to respond.

Larry Broderick, Irish Bank Officials Association

Thank you very much delegates. Larry Broderick, IBOA the finance union speaking in support of having the debate on Motion 27. I think Mick Jennings

when he addressed conference talked about the need for unity in the trade union movement, and there is no doubt about it that in terms of the recent discussions at national level has highlighted and has created a schism between the private sector and public sector in relation to national agreements. There is a solution to this particular problem and the solution lies in the fact that in private sector industry, which is extremely profitable, local bargaining, is the answer. And throughout the negotiations of national wage agreements, many unions both in the public sector and in the private sector, talked about this as being the model to address our needs as a united trade union movement. This particular motion allows for this conference to open that debate. IBOA, the finance union, was quite critical of Congress that it didn't have a Special Delegate Conference to address the issues in relation to Congress as part of the last pay talks. And that was understandable given the time spans involved. But at the end of the day, colleagues, this conference dictates the policy for the trade union movement in the public and in the private sector and I would urge conference, and particularly unions in the private sector that sometimes look at with scone to other colleagues in the public sector, that this is an ideal opportunity to give a clear message to Government and to the employers out there that we are an united movement, that we will have our debates, we will have them discussed on this floor and there is a resolution to addressing the buoyancy in this economy and it is about local bargaining in the private and public sector. Support this particular motion. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

I am going to ask Michael to exercise a right of reply before putting the adoption of Standing Orders to conference.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee

Delegates, you elect a Standing Orders Committee to do a job for you. To determine whether the matters that are put before you are properly in order or not and the unanimous view of the of the Standing Orders Committee, and nothing I have heard changes me in that view at all, is that this motion is clearly out of order. Now there is no question, and I must say this clearly from the rostrum, there is no question of denial of free speech or anything of that nature. There is no question but that the issues that are in the motion are important issues and in fact the Secretary of Standing Orders and myself met with the TUI last night and endeavoured to find a resolution to this, we are quite happy, Standing Orders Committee are quite happy to recognise that the issues are important, and indeed to say to the Executive we think you should address these, but the motion is out of order. It is properly the responsibility of a Special Delegate Conference. Now, ok, there wasn't a conference of the kind that there had been in the past but that was because of very particular circumstances. The motion, as Jim Dorney himself indicated, was ruled out of order in 2005, a very similar motion. In 2003 a very similar motion was indicated that it had to go to a

Special Delegate Conference. That is that the Standing Orders Committee does its business. This motion is out of order and it is as simple as that. We are not denying the importance of the issues; we are not denying free speech. We are simply saying that you, conference, decided some years ago that Special Delegate Conferences should be held in the Republic or in Northern Ireland to deal with matters that were specific to those areas and this motion deals with the pay and conditions, particularly the conditions, that would arise in national partnerships in the Republic of Ireland and as such it is the property of a Special Delegate Conference. Indeed there is actually a contradiction in terms of what the TUI is saying. Because what they are saying in the motion is that they don't like the idea of people who are not affected by something voting on it. But what you are actually going to do if you put this on the agenda here is that people who are not affected by partnership talks in the Republic of Ireland are going to vote on this motion. Now I have no difficulty with that in one sense but you decided, and you set the procedure, you set the precedent. Standing Orders Committee elected by you are doing the job that you asked us to do. This motion is out of order and I ask you to reject the reference back.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, delegates I am going to put the adoption of Standing Orders Committee Report No 1 to a vote and I will ask the Tellers to take up their positions. Could I have silence please.

Just to clear up an issue that has arisen here at the top table and may arise later on this evening, there is a provision in the Constitution that suspension of Standing Orders requires a two-thirds majority. I don't believe that this is a suspension of Standing Orders, it is the adoption of Standing Orders and I think Conference should accept a simple majority, one way or the other, will decide whether the Standing Orders Committee Report No 1 is accepted or not. Is that agreed, that we determine this by simple majority as it doesn't fall under Suspension of Standing Orders. A point of order is being made Jim.

Jim Dorney, Teachers' Union of Ireland

I would just like to clarify please, President, about the procedure. My understanding of the procedure is that the reference back that was moved by my union and supported by some other unions, should be put first to the adoption of Standing Orders. That is an amendment to the Standing Orders and if you could clarify that I would be grateful because I think that is the fairest way.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

What I was about to do Jim before you raised the point of order was indicate to Conference that it seemed to me that the issue is pretty straightforward. If the Conference rejects the proposal from the Chairman of Standing Orders to adopt

Standing Orders Report No 1 it simply means that the motion that has been ruled out of order is now ruled in order. It is as simple as that. So if the vote of the Conference is to adopt the Standing Orders Committee Report No 1 then the motion is out of order because the Conference is accepting the ruling of the Standing Orders Committee.

So with that clarification can I now call a vote on the adoption of Standing Orders Committee Report No 1? All those in favour please show. I would ask you to hold this until we have an indication from the Tellers that they have the vote counted.

If your arm is getting tired switch hands. I still have not got a signal. Ok are we..? John are you making this call? Ok, is that ok, can I take it that you have counted the votes in favour. Those who voted in favour you can lower your hands now. And can I now call on the vote against adoption of Standing Orders Report No 1. Ok you can all lower your hands now I think.

If you just give us a moment delegates I think it is important at this stage of the proceedings that we are clear on whether or not Standing Orders Committee Report No 1 as proposed has been adopted or whether that an adjustment is going to be made. Just give us a second until we count the votes.

Ok delegates can I call you to order please. The number in favour of the adoption of Standing Orders Committee Report No 1 was 212, the number against was 190.

Thank God he didn't call a two-thirds majority!

Ok, can we accept Conference then that Standing Orders Committee Report No 1 has been adopted and I am now going to invite Michael to move Standing Orders Committee Report No 2 and I think copies of that have been circulated this morning. Michael.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee

Following up from that success I will move No 2. Its not often you have four or five General Secretaries raged against you and you still win.

Ok, Standing Orders Committee No 2.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Don't provoke them Michael. It's not advisable I assure you.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee

Standing Orders Committee Report No 2 which, as the President indicated on your tables. Again I will just run through the paragraphs.

Paragraph one deals with the election of the Executive Council. Since the close of nominations two of the nominations that had been received have been withdrawn and therefore that leaves only the exact number of candidates for the Executive allowing for the eight places for women, for the minimum of eight women, and that the number of candidates is now equal to the number of places and therefore there will actually be no need for an election for the Executive. There will, as I indicated in Report No 1, be an election for other bodies.

Paragraph two just itemises the guests and fraternal and fraternal address, the general principal of which we accepted in Standing Orders Committee Report No 1. An Taoiseach is visiting us on Wednesday and he has indicated that he wishes to speak at 10am. Standing Orders Committee is of the view then that there is little point in starting at 9.30am and then breaking for the Taoiseach. In other words we would ask delegates to assemble on Wednesday at 9.45am and take your seats and the conference will actually begin that morning with the Taoiseach's address.

Item 4 we have looked at the delegates and decided that they are all in order and similarly if anybody wants to inspect the delegates for affiliated organisations they can do so.

And lastly as you will have noticed there are various display stands outside which we would ask all delegates to visit and express your interest in them as appropriate.

So I move Standing Orders Report No 2.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Are there any speakers, yes, we have an indication. It's David isn't it?

David Bell, Communications Workers Union, UK

Thank you President. David Bell, Communications Workers Union UK to refer back to point two in paragraph one of the Standing Orders Committee Report No 2. And it is with a degree of intrepidation that I rise to challenge standing order no 2 in that regard. Regarding the impropriated withdrawal of my nomination that is David Bell, CWU UK, from the list of candidates for election to the NEC. But the abuse of power should be challenged wherever it exists and especially in the trade union movement where we are seen by society in general as the champions of equity and that certainly relieves us of the conference this week. Colleagues my nomination was endorsed unanimously by the Northern Ireland

regional committee of the CWU, UK and has not been rescinded by that body. Nor has it been rescinded by the National Executive of the union in London. But it has been withdrawn on an individual basis by the General Secretary and by the Regional Secretary. I must add the Regional Secretary says that is under duress by the General Secretary in London. I have not been given any reason for that. But the effect of that has been to rob me of my dignity and to potentially to create a hostile environment for me here in Congress this week. And it is a distraction, particularly at a time when we are engaged in industrial action with Royal Mail in the UK.

I accept that the actions of those individuals is an internal matter for the CWU UK and that will be addressed because I will be raising those issues of bullying and harassment to the appropriate forums. But I appeal to Conference on the basis of the provisions of Rule 2 of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions which says that matters that are pertinent to the island of Ireland in terms of industry and economy are proper to the Regional Committee in Northern Ireland to address. And, I would include in that analysis my nomination, which I repeat has not been overturned by any of the representatives to that Committee.

So in conclusion Conference, it is important in terms of equality for all that democracy prevails over the abuse of power by individuals operating outside the scope of my union rules and the constitution of ICTU. I would, therefore, ask Conference to refer back my nomination for election to the NEC and I know that might piss off 30 people who believe they have been elected to the NEC this week but what price democracy? And what price zero tolerance for bullying and harassment isn't it. Equality for All – support the reference back. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, as there is no other speaker to Standing Orders Committee Report No 2, I am going to invite Michael to exercise the right of reply.

Michael Sharpe, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee

Again this is purely a matter of order. The nomination was validly received but subsequently was, as the delegate has indicated, was withdrawn by the General Secretary of the union concerned. The procedure that has gone with all such nominations is that a letter from the General Secretary, a withdrawal from the General Secretary to Congress would always be taken as withdrawing the nomination. But if there are any doubts – and just on a matter of fact – the delegate may not be aware of this because it only happened in the very recent couple of days, but not only has the General Secretary written but Congress has in the last couple of days received a letter from the body that did nominate the individual – the Northern Ireland Regional Committee – and they also withdrew the nomination. So there can be no question, delegates, this is a matter of order. It is obviously a matter for the CWU UK internally to follow up, that the

nomination has clearly been withdrawn and cannot go before the Conference. I reject the reference back.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, if you want to raise a point of order please come forward to the rostrum.

John McLoughlin, CWU UK

My name is John McLoughlin – I am Branch Secretary of Northern Ireland's union. I am also on the committee of the region. I was around when Davy's nomination was put through for the election for the ICTU. In fact I seconded it. We had a meeting – not of the full region – but of the delegates to Conference last night. And categorically, Davy's nomination has not been withdrawn. Davy's nomination still stands whether people like it or not and that was agreed unanimously last night. The only way Davy's nomination can be withdrawn is the reasons set down in this draft. We haven't had a regional meeting to withdraw. So as a matter and I am only stating the fact, Davy's nomination still stands with our Region. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, delegates, I don't think Michael it's appropriate that you would come back on an issue which is a point of order. I think you have set out the information that is before the Standing Orders Committee very clearly so I am now going to put to Conference the proposal that Conference adopts Standing Orders Committee Report No 2. All those in favour please show. Sorry just to say to Tellers – can I have a show of those who showed in favour lower their hands and can I have an indication of those against. Can you accept Conference that Standing Orders Committee Report No 2 has been adopted by a decision of the Conference? Agreed. Thanks very much indeed.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON Vice President, Congress

Ok, Conference, can I have your attention please. Thank you for that fiery start. He is one of Donegal's favourite sons. We have been proud for the last two years to call him our President. I am delighted to call on Peter McLoone to make his Presidential address.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Colleagues, tomorrow morning we will debate motions on Northern Ireland, and discuss the activities of the Northern Ireland Committee set out in the Biennial Report. It marks the beginning of a new era. The restoration of the political institutions established under the Good Friday Agreement has potentially opened the door to the ideals set out in many Congress policy documents on the labour market, on equality, and human rights as well as the economy, public services and many other issues.

The goal of integrating this Island's economy - as provided for in *Towards 2016* and the National Development Plan - will now become a permanent feature in our engagements with the two governments. The translation of this ideal into reality presents Congress with great challenges. I believe it will inevitably transform our approach to the pursuit of many objectives that, hitherto, we have raised separately with the two governments. Congress will work in partnership with Governments and the business sector to consolidate cross-border economic structures for shared economic development and prosperity. But our immediate priority will be to build greater co-operation on labour market policies and workplace issues, as a tangible and concrete expression of the commitment to build a fairer society for all of the citizens and residents of this island.

I want this conference to formally recognise the trade union movement's contribution, over many decades, to creating the conditions that made a political settlement possible. I want to pay particular tribute to the trade union leadership in Northern Ireland. Over the last four decades you remained united behind one common purpose – the peaceful resolution of conflict. Working at that critical interface between civil society and the political system, your interventions helped people understand the problems, and you persisted until people were able to identify - and eventually deal with - the many barriers to solutions.

Delegates, I think we have been extremely fortunate in the quality and commitment of our Northern Ireland affiliates throughout this difficult period in our history. Supported by thousands of activists and members, they sustained and strengthened the trade union movement in the most difficult circumstances imaginable. This morning we acknowledge your role, congratulate you on your tenacity, and pledge to continue to actively support you in the many challenges that lie ahead.

The theme of this conference is: 'Equality for all'. It reflects the fact that this year has been designated European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. It's a time for celebrating the progress we have achieved on our objective of removing

discrimination from the workplace. As a result of those efforts, tens of thousands of union members and workers now enjoy better pay, improved working conditions and a safer workplace. But it's also necessary to highlight the fact that many problems of inequality in society have persisted – and some have got worse - despite our undoubted economic success. We have become used to political and business leaders telling us that equality and equal opportunities are now embedded in our society, simply because we have enacted legislation outlawing discrimination.

Of course, legislation sets the rules of the game. But without major policy shifts and a fundamental change in mindsets, we cannot pretend that all our citizens share the benefits of economic success. The rising tide does not lift all boats. That's a myth propagated by the rich and powerful, and those who shamelessly exploit every opportunity to increase their personal and corporate wealth – often at the expense of others.

Workers' rights

This was never more in evidence than in the period leading up to the negotiations on *Towards 2016*, which, as you all know, were dominated - not by pay – but by the issue of employment standards. Among other things, this reflected our huge concerns about the earlier drafts of the EU Services Directive, and the emergence of a number of major disputes involving the exploitation of migrant workers. We genuinely feared that these events were symptomatic of a wider 'race to the bottom' of working conditions – a race in which ALL workers would be losers. This Congress secured stronger employment standards, underpinned by a more robust compliance regime, which has undoubtedly shifted the balance back in favour of the individual worker. Let no one in this Conference be in doubt – it was a major achievement, hard won. But we left the negotiations with no illusion about the challenges that lie ahead. There is still ample evidence that, when push comes to shove, the needs of the market still carry far more clout with our Governments, than workers' rights.

For trade unionists, it is a bitterly disappointing experience to see a Labour government bending over backwards to deny its citizens – in Northern Ireland and elsewhere – the basic protections set out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter represents a statement of basic values to inform the development of the EU – basic values like respect for human rights and human dignity, democracy, equality, and workers' rights. Subsequent media reports that the Irish Government had also sought to hedge its bets on these fundamental values and freedoms came as a shock – and remains a matter of huge concern to Congress. Any form of opt-out would represent a significant shift in the Taoiseach's position – outlined to this Conference in 2005 – and would jar incongruously with everything we have tried to achieve on workplace rights in *Towards 2016*. We expect the Taoiseach will definitively clarify the Governments position when he addresses us tomorrow morning. But I have no doubt that this

conference will deliver a clear message that Congress could never support a treaty that included such an 'opt out' clause.

Over the last quarter of a century, the EU has underpinned many gains in workers rights. But we now have the most right-leaning, employer-friendly Commission and Council, in the history of the European Union. Since our last Conference in 2005, unaccountable private equity and hedge funds have acquired control of vast pools of capital - and control over significant swathes of the economy and employment. Increasingly, unions are experiencing situations where globally-driven competition and market pressures expose workers, consumers and communities to fundamental flaws in legal protections, which allow businesses to simply maximise profit without any regard to the social and economic consequences. Even staff, who hitherto felt secure in their jobs, their working conditions, and their pensions, are feeling increasingly vulnerable.

Increasingly, what we witness on employment standards - what we experience on pensions - is evidence of a world of work that has lost its way: A world of work where greed - not competitiveness - is often the prime driver, and where the human collateral of "business" decisions is seen to be of no consequence at all.

There are still some who question the relevance of trade unions to the modern workplace and economy. I reflect on our experiences over the past two years, and wonder if there was ever a more important time for unions to be strong and united in the defence of working people, their families and their communities. Unions – private and public - have gradually come to recognise the need to work together, ever more effectively, to combat these challenges to our very existence. And this Congress represents a powerful guiding coalition against those who would relentlessly drive the race to the bottom. But we need to move our efforts up a gear; to actively and wholeheartedly support new initiatives that will make us stronger, and our members more secure and prosperous.

Firstly, we must secure the legislation, agreed under *Towards 2016*, to dramatically improve the regulation of employment agencies and agency workers. Britain, Hungary and Ireland are the only countries that allow agency workers to be paid less, and treated worse, than regular staff. This has to stop and we demand immediate legislation to outlaw such reprehensible practices - as a top priority. Secondly we must secure the full restoration of the protections promised under the 2001/2004 Industrial Relations Acts.

The Supreme Court judgement on the Ryanair case cannot be the last word on the right of workers – individually and collectively - to fair representation in the workplace. It may be tempting for Government and employers' representatives to engage in a bit of revisionism. But they know well that the Supreme Court outcome was not what we collectively envisaged when we signed *Sustaining Progress* and *Towards 2016*. The ILO insists that freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are fundamental rights, to be respected by member

states – including Ireland. It would be an outrageous moral lapse on the part of Government, and a ‘breach of contract’ under Sustaining Progress and T16, if it fails to intervene directly and immediately to restore the protections promised in the legislation.

Finally we must ensure that both governments maintain effective regulation of worker protections, and strengthen them where necessary. Trade unions present no threat to employers who treat their workforce properly and fairly. All we demand is a fair deal and adequate protection for the members we represent.

Trade union organisation and recruitment

This week, Congress launches what we expect will be a major concerted campaign to address the issue of trade union membership density. More people than ever before are members of trade unions in Ireland, north and south. Our influence at home and in the European Union has enhanced, not diminished. There are many reasons why our successful recruitment efforts have not been able to keep pace with the extraordinary employment growth on this Ireland. But, despite what our critics say, I do not believe that relevance is one of them. That said, we can no longer ignore the need to work together in a collective way to bring the benefits of union membership to more and more people, and reverse the trend of decline in membership density.

Our campaign will, improve awareness of trade unions; promote the benefits of joining a union for all workers, from the migrant labourer to the well-qualified professional; create and communicate a vision of trade unionism as indispensable to people’s working lives; support the organisational work of individual unions in different sectors; and develop campaigns capable of supporting existing efforts to increase union membership, generally and in individual sectors.

You’ll see the findings of an extensive research programme into workers’ attitudes towards unions in the biennial report. Undertaken between 2006 and 2007 under the auspices of the LIFT project, it has given us tremendous new insights, and we can be encouraged by the many positive responses. But we also recognise that our function remains poorly understood. And it’s under-appreciated by tens of thousands of workers, who have never been given the opportunity to join a trade union.

Women’s representation

We achieved a significant milestone at the last biennial conference, when changes in the composition of the Executive Council and General Purposes Committee took effect. As a result, we now have the highest ever representation of women on the Executive. We also committed to achieving further real progress on gender representation and participation. The development of a ‘model equality

clause', supported by a robust audit process, was intended to ensure that this was more than a paper exercise.

The LIFT project was another major initiative. At its core, LIFT addresses the need to equip those who aspire to leadership roles, and was extended to our Northern Ireland membership in March. With a sharp focus on leadership skills, its key objective is to remove barriers that have limited women trade unionists' scope of action and expression. The project attracted huge interest, and Conference should extend a special thanks to the participants, and our deep appreciation to project director Sally-Ann Kinahan, project advisor Frank Vaughan, and project manager Danyanne Quemper, for the work they have done to make this project a success.

The Chairperson, Catherine Byrne, has been a formidable leader who, critically, not just engaged the support of general secretaries for the initiative on developing future leaders, but also developed a very successful series of strategic conversations with the leadership of the trade union movement that will, I believe, be sustained into the future. Delegates, I hope you will agree that the continuation of this LIFT initiative is critical for our future sustainability and growth, and will join with me and pledge support to its continuance.

Public services

I want to say a few words about public services, where unions face a tough challenge to regain the agenda from those who care more for private profit than high-quality, equitable services. The recent elections - North and South – saw an intensification of the debate about the efficiency and quality of public services. This will intensify in the coming months, and the outcome of this debate will have a profound impact on those who depend on public services - and those who deliver them.

Public service is what defines a society. It gives it humanity, and I passionately believe that a fight for public service is a fight for a better, fairer, quality of life for all. We utterly, and totally, reject the notion that private markets and the private sector can be seen as central to the improvement of the human condition. Our campaigns to defend public services must start from the premise that our strongest allies are the people we serve. There remains a strong culture of support for public provision throughout this island, where ordinary people have no stomach for the unfettered free market approach advocated by our loudest critics. But, we have a responsibility to genuinely engage with debates about better quality, more responsiveness, and increased flexibility in service provision, if we are to retain public belief in our own bona fides. That means our campaigns must go beyond protecting the status quo and restating what we are against. We can't paint a picture of perfect services, or uniformly high quality. Public servants know, better than anyone, about the problems because they have to deal with them every single day.

But we must introduce some balance and objectivity into a debate that, too often, focuses on the occasional spectacular failure and then characterises all public services and all public servants on that basis. This is critically important for the future of public services and the many people that depend on them. Because, if unchecked, the myth that public services are uniformly bad and incapable of reform will inevitably undermine any hope of developing equitable and high quality services, available to everyone in our society.

It's important that all unions work together to challenge the misconceptions – about pay, staff numbers, and performance - and tell the positive stories. And we now need to go even further and become genuine advocates of real reform. We can no longer leave the task of defining the reform agenda to management or politicians. We need to come up with simple understandable reforms that meet public demands and embrace the involvement of citizens who want more say in how their money is spent and how we can achieve better outcomes.

Social partnership

21 years ago, at the 1986 ICTU Conference in Belfast, quite by accident, I was tasked with successfully moving a motion on behalf the LGPSU, which sought Congress support for a return to centralised pay bargaining. Since that initial involvement, I have always sought to understand the way we formulated, approached and solved problems at each stage of the evolution of what became known as 'social partnership'. During my term as vice president, I became fascinated with how quickly a new generation of commentators were writing social partnership's role out of the Ireland's economic success story. This analysis did not include any reference to the struggles or sacrifices made, over long periods, by working people within the framework of social partnership, to create the economic success that many now take for granted.

When the negotiations on Towards 2016 concluded, I decided to attempt to put the record straight, and record how much of our success had been inspired, or influenced, by the seven consecutive agreements negotiated since 1987. Three of our best industrial correspondents agreed to undertake the task. They decided to relate the story through the insights of the people who had lived it – not just trade unionists, but people from the political system, the business community, farming and civic society organisations - as they struggled with the enormity of the task of transforming Ireland from an economic basket case to a model of economic development and near full employment. The project is now complete and, yesterday, a book called 'Saving the Future: How Social Partnership Shaped Ireland's Economic Success' was published by Blackhall.

At one level, the book is simply a contribution to a more balanced historical debate on social partnership's role in achieving the transformation we have collectively experienced. In other, maybe more important ways, the analysis

allows us to recognise how the trade union movement has responded to significant challenges, throughout this tumultuous period in our history: How we played our part in creating an economy that provides jobs and prosperity, while giving our children a range of choices other than emigration.

What's particularly striking, when you look back, is that trade union achievements never happen by chance. We don't get many lucky breaks and anything of substance we have achieved had to be planned for, worked and struggled for at every stage. This is as true today as it ever was. And, if Congress is to continue as a vibrant and effective force for social change - if it is to continue to advance the influence and image trade unionism, and to protect our members and their families – our idealism will always need to be matched with hard nosed pragmatism in the continuous engagement between organised labour, the markets, and Government.

At a time, when hope is sometimes seen as a precious commodity, our greatest influence has to be our commitment to working people, that we will trenchantly oppose the abuses of those who pursue corporate and financial interests at the expense of the well being of ordinary citizens. The engagement between trade unions and the political and business systems will always be unbalanced. We don't have – we'll never have - the financial clout of big business, multinational corporations or hedge funds. But we are asset rich in the talent, commitment, imagination and experience of the people in this hall, the thousands of activists and staff in workplaces and union offices around the country and, above all, the 800,000 extraordinary men and women on this island, who are union members.

Delegates, if the last two years have taught me there are no quick-fix magic solutions to our problems, they have also taught me that this Congress has hope, courage, and self belief. We can, and will, continue to make a difference. When you leave Bundoran on Friday, spread the word: We're here to stay and we intend to get bigger and better!

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress

Thank you delegates. I now call on my sister Vice President, Rosheen Callender to move the motion of thanks to our President.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Patricia. I am absolutely delighted to be moving this vote of thanks to our President Peter McLoone for what I think was an extremely far ranging, far sighted, very inspiring speech to set off our Conference this week. He has touched on all the major issues of our time, all the challenges, the changes that have been made in Northern Ireland and the progress still to be made, progress which has been made on equality and the progress still to be made by us through our great efforts in that regard. He has touched on the importance of the

European dimension, the European Charter on Fundamental Rights and he has also touched on the important issues at home of carrying through the commitments that were made last year under *Towards 2016* and in particular the commitments on improving labour standards, protecting them and driving forward the work of the new agency group, who's remit is to do precisely that.

He has touched on the significance of the Ryan Air ruling and the crucial importance of us making further progress on the whole issue of trade union organisation through the various instruments that have been set up, not least our demonstration with the LIFT project and others of our commitment to Equality for All. But most of all I think Peter should be thanked for his time as President for demonstrating the most deep and profound understanding of the significance and breath of partnership process in this country. The need for not only development of high quality public and social services, as well as ensuring the best possible standard applying both in the private and public sectors but his deep appreciation of the needs of the wider trade union movement, I think has given him the competence, capabilities and experience to provide us with the most excellent, strong, steady and thoughtful leadership over the last two years. A President, the previous two years as Vice President and many years before that as an extremely active, thoughtful member of the Executive Council and General Purposes Committee of Congress.

Peter is an excellent chairperson, which is not an easy skill, a skill which most of us find very difficult, and he is also a man who is modest enough to talk to and consult and to take advice from his friends and colleagues in the leadership of other unions which I think is a tremendously important thing for any leader. So for all those attributes and his wonderful contribution and his inspiring speech today, I would like to thank Peter McLoone most sincerely and move this vote of thanks to him.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress

Thank you very much Rosheen. I would now like to call on our colleague and comrade from the Executive Council Jerry Shanahan to second the vote of thanks.

Jerry Shanahan, Amicus

Mr President, colleagues, I have worked with Peter over a number of years, a couple of decades I think at this stage, but more closely in the last couple of years, particularly in terms of the last round of negotiations – sort of under the bonnet of a car as opposed to sitting in one of the back seats. I would like to maybe focus on the personality because it is difficult to get, I know this is Peter's native county, and I always find it difficult – you stereotype what is useful in the context of the next debate. Like it is easy to stereotype what a Dublin person is – sort of indignant and I think that is from years of the Vikings came along and then

they were followed by the Normans and then the people over there that we talk about now and again, and then after independence and everything else, the GPO – what would you get – you would have culchies. You get people like me and particularly Cork people coming to Dublin and taking over. And then you can stereotype Cork because you can say well they have **(tape change)** a radicalism about them. Because outside of here you go for a walk along the cliff you will see beaches like you would see in Cuba. Beautiful white beaches expect whoever designed this part of the world – who ever designed he or she – or it could have evolved of course if you are thinking that theory, they gave people Caribbean beaches but they didn't give them the weather to enjoy it. So you have a sort of a resigned sense about yourself. And I think Peter exhibited that – a resigned sense but also a radicalism and I think that is the sort of veins – the water is flowing from Cuba along the Gulf Stream which hit the Caribbean type beaches of Donegal. So a resigned radicalism if that is not a contradiction in terms.

But I have to say my admiration for Peter went up a few notches – a particular number of notches particularly during the course of the last round of negotiations because I have been around a number of social partnership negotiations, all of which are difficult because something always makes them difficult. But the last one we had the Irish Ferries dispute – that magnificent march demonstrations all around the country when then fed into the whole employment rights debate and then there was six months of negotiations and people did start getting nervy and people did start getting irritable and there was an element of public versus private there. And I have to say that Peter steadied the nerves, steadied the ship and allowed no friction to exist or any argument about what, at the time it affected everybody, but at the time was seen as largely a private sector issue. And if that wasn't bad enough just when everybody thought the deal was coming to a point when it could be put to the delegates we came in and held the whole thing up for another three weeks talking about pensions. So even then he kept his cool so I have to say I admire him.

He does come from a country that gave us Peadar O'Donnell so that social radical tradition does exist in Donegal and I think in fairness to Peter, he may not be seen as one of the sort of a "rap the red flag round me" type of people but he is a social radical in that tradition and I think there is a different way of doing it nowadays but the more sophistic way of doing it nowadays and I think he is one of the people who does that and I take great pleasure in seconding the motion. Thank you very much.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress

Thank you very much Jerry. I now have pleasure in handing back to the President.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much both Rosheen and Jerry. You were flying by the seat of your pants there for a while Jerry. I was glad I wasn't in the Chair.

Ok we now move on to the Equality Debate. Sorry, it's yourself, David. Sorry about that.

David Begg, General Secretary, Congress

As you see, I have to fight for my speaking rights as well.

After all those great flights of oratory there I am glad my only function really is to, on your behalf, to welcome our fraternal guests and visitors and just introduce the annual report. And maybe the best thing to do is if I go down through the list of people you could perhaps welcome them with some applause at the end and the other thing to say is where mention people that applies also to their partners, wives and accompanying guests too. And there are some people who will be visiting us during the course of the week and we will just introduce them when they are speaking at the appropriate sections of the report.

So first of all to welcome our guest, our fraternal guests, who have held senior positions within the trade union movement in the past headed up by Billy Athley and Harold O'Sullivan, Phil Flynn and John Freeman. Mrs Sheila Conroy, Peter Cassells, Jim McCusker, Brendan Mackin and Sean O'Riordain who has just recently retired as General Secretary of the Association of Higher Civil & Public Servants.

Then other guests are our very good friend John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation who has joined us this morning. Brendan Barber from the TUC, Niall Crowley from the Equality Authority, Grahame Smith from the Scottish TUC and Felicity Williams from the Wales TUC.

Representing various Government Departments, Mr Billie Matthews from the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, also Mr Michael Greene from that department. Ciaran Connolly, well known to most of you from the Department of Finance and later in the week we will have the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach, Dermot McCarthy.

From the National Centre for Partnership & Performance, Ms Lucy Fallon-Byrne, Mr Pat McCartan from Labour Relations Agency in Northern Ireland. From the Labour Court then our very good friend and former colleague, Kevin Duffy, Chair of the Court and the Deputy Chair is Caroline Jenkinson and Ray McGee and the Worker Members Padraigin Ni Mhurchu, Noel O'Neill and Jack Nash.

From the Labour Relations Commission, Kevin Foley and Declan Morrin. From FAS, Pat O'Callaghan. Ger Deering, the new head of the National Employment Rights Authority, Paul Oaks from the Equality Commission and Lord and Lady Brett.

Now, I would be very happy colleagues if you could give them a very warm welcome.

Just in introducing the Biennial Report colleagues, can I say that reiterating what the President said, the theme this year is Equality and it is a very important theme because it does put clear blue water between ourselves and a very strong trend of political opinion in this Island which believes that there is merit for society and the economy in inequality, something that we contest very strongly. The report, I think, reflects a fairly busy two years, most of which have been covered by the President in his very comprehensive and wide ranging address. I suppose in terms of the structure we have tended to follow the structure of recent years. The introduction is intended to give the reader a sort of a birds eye view, if you like, of how things are in the trade union world just at the moment and then the different chapters of the report go into the detailed work that has been done in relation to each of the important headings.

The appendices are also quite important, I think, because they contain a good deal of important information for reference purposes in your own work during the course of the year. And I would like to take the opportunity to thank very much my own colleagues in Congress for the amount of work they have done, and I hope you will agree when you do read through the report, that it is a good volume of work which has been accomplished on your behalf by the Executive Council and by the officials of Congress working for them over the period of the two years.

Lastly, if I may, I would like to say that every time we meet in conference one is reminded of the people who are no longer with us and there is an Obituaries Section on page 171 of the report where we mark the passing of a number of very good and close colleagues including Muriel Todd, who worked in our Belfast Office, Mary Kelly, Gladys Murtage and Hugie Geraghty who worked with us up to the time of his death in the Dublin office. And I think that almost because he was still working with us at the time of his death it hit us all very hard because Hugie was a very well respected and close colleague of us all. He comes from a trade union family which has given an enormous amount to the movement over

the years and his passing I think at a relevantly young age a huge point of regret for us.

I was reading just recently a new book that has been published about William O'Brien who was General Secretary of the ITGWU and there was one thing in it – it just struck me when Peter was winding up what he said there, one passage in it which reported on a conference which took place here in 1942, which I think for higher mathematics is about 65 years ago. And there were great debates at this conference, great rows about the nature of fascism of all things and the future of the Labour Party and the future of the trade union movement and so on. And I just thought, you know, thinking in terms of what Peter said, this afternoon we will be doing some, hopefully, some very interesting things talking about the work and organisation that Sally Anne has been working on, but when you think about the strength of the trade union movement now, at 832,000 members and the circumstances at that time and the fact that it has endured so long and it is still at such a prominent role in Irish public life is a significant thing. So while we should rise to all challenges and recognise what we have to do, the nature of trade unionism is enduring and we are no flash in the pan or no organisation that disappears. We have a very proud history and we must do justice to that history in the course of our deliberations this week.

I hope you all have an enjoyable week here in Bundoran.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, delegates we are certainly not on schedule but I am going to invite Niall Crowley to address Conference, to open the Equality Debate.

Niall Crowley, Equality Authority & Chair of European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

Thank you very much President and delegates. This is the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and Congress and its affiliate unions are key partners with the Equality Authority in implementing a national strategy for the year. And this year you have chosen Equality for All as the banner theme for this Biennial Delegate Conference. And in doing so, Congress and its affiliate unions have stepped forward once more to assert and to affirm your role as champions for a more equal society. And as a voice of solidarity with those groups who continue to experience significant and persistent inequality in our society. We have, as the President has said, made important and valuable progress in combating discrimination in adjusting for diversity and in promoting equality in Ireland in recent years. We have, for example, equality legislation that prohibits discrimination in the workplace and in vocational training, in the provision of goods and services, education and accommodation across nine different grounds. We have an equality infrastructure in place. The Equality Authority with a mandate to promote equality and to combat discrimination in the areas covered

by the equality legislation. And the Equality Tribunal which is the first point of redress of cases under the equality legislation. This, I believe, is progress worthy of celebration. This is progress that has been shaped and driven through the social partnership process. Congress and its affiliates have played a central role in this and I believe continue to do so as is evident again in the commitments in *Towards 2016*. Commitments to review the resources available to the equality infrastructure. Commitments to have due regard to equality in implementing the new lifecycle approach to policy making. Commitments to implement an Equal Opportunities Framework Committee to support planned and systematic approaches to equality at the level of the work place and commitments to implement a Work Life Balance Committee to support flexible working arrangements at the level of the enterprise.

The Equality Authority appreciates the opportunity to work with Congress in implementing these valuable commitments and we acknowledge the key leadership that is being provided by Congress and its affiliate unions for the elimination of inequality in all its forms in our society to the implementation of these and other commitments.

However, when we look across the nine grounds covered by our equality legislation we must acknowledge the significant inequalities that persist. When we look to our equality infrastructure we must acknowledge resource barriers that hinder the effective implementation of our equality legislation. When we look to our equality legislation we must acknowledge that it requires review and evolution if it is to keep pace with developments in other jurisdictions. When we look to the workplace we must acknowledge new forms of discrimination that are taking hold through the use of recruitment agencies. The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is therefore timely. It provides an opportunity to celebrate the progress made, to acknowledge the significant inequality that persists and most importantly to renew our commitment to and efforts for a more equal society.

In renewing your commitment to a more equal society, I hope that Congress and its affiliate unions could articulate a new and enhanced ambition for equality. We need to move beyond the goal of equality of opportunity. A goal that can all too easily coexist with and even mask significant inequality. We need to articulate an ambition for equality that is about achieving full equality and practice for groups experiencing inequality in access to resources, in access to power and decision making, in access to relations of respect and solidarity with the wider society and in access to a status and standing for their diversity.

I hope that Congress and its affiliate unions could give expression to this ambition for equality by seeking a long term and practical legacy from the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Such a legacy could usefully be shaped by and driven by trade union advocacy at societal level and by trade union negotiation at workplace level. There are three key elements of legacy

from the European Year that usefully be pursued by Congress and its affiliate unions.

The first element involves a renewal of our equality infrastructure. This would require adequately resourcing the Equality Tribunal so as to remove the current backlog of cases to be heard and adequately resourcing the Equality Authority so that it could deploy the full range of its powers and functions. This renewal would also require a further evolution of the equality legislation to include new obligations on the public sector to have due regard to equality and carrying out its functions. New obligations in the private sector to be planned and systematic in its approach to equality and new obligations on all employers and service providers to make adjustments for diversity across the nine grounds covered in our equality legislation.

The second element of legacy involves the development of positive action to address the significant inequalities, both in the work place and in the wider society. This would involve by way of example initiatives to address the gender pay gap experienced by women and in the wider society to achieve a more balanced sharing of caring responsibilities between men and women. Initiatives to increase the presence of travellers in the workplace and in the wider society to address the high mortality rates experienced by travellers. Initiatives to improve the situation of gay/lesbian and bisexual people employed in institutions that seek to maintain a particular religious ethos. And in the wider society initiatives to secure access to civil marriage for same sex couples. Initiatives to increase the participation and progress in employment for people with disabilities and in the wider society initiatives to address the deficits in service provision to people with disabilities. Initiatives to change the experiences of under employment and exploitation for black and minority ethnic people and in the wider society initiatives to promote a model of an integrated society that involves changes both for majority and minority communities. And, finally initiatives that secure real choices for older people in relation to retirement ages and, in the wider society initiatives that challenge the negative stereotyping experienced by older people.

The third element of this legacy involves institutional change in the workplace itself to support planned and systematic approaches to equality. Each workplace should be encouraged and supported to have an equality policy in place setting out a commitment to equality for employees and customers. To have equality and diversity training to be staff knowledge and skills in this area, and to have an equality action plan to identify actions that would be taken to achieve full equality and practice for all employees and customers.

I do look forward to working with you towards achieving such a legacy from the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. I acknowledge again the valuable leadership you have shown for creating a more equal society and the manner in which this leadership is being reflected in this Biennial Delegate Conference. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much Niall. As you know Niall is the Chief Executive of the Equality Authority but he is also Chairperson of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and we thank you very much for a wide ranging address. Before moving on and inviting Sally Anne to introduce the Equality Debate, can I mention that we have been joined on the platform by John Monks the General Secretary of the ETUC who flew in early this morning but he also has to leave around mid-day, so at about 12 O' Clock I am going to invite John to address the Conference in order to facilitate his departure. Sally Anne.

Sally Anne Kinahan, Assistant General Secretary, Congress

Thank you President, delegates. If I could start off by thanking the Executive Council for agreeing to designate this BDC with the theme "Equality for All" in recognition of this important year - European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. And I would also like to thank Niall Crowley for the support he has given through the Equality Authority and the National Co-ordinating Committee for the year to our organisation and, to the trade union movement generally, to help us to raise awareness, understanding and to progress the equality agenda generally. Thank you very much Niall.

I hoping that the discussions today, colleagues, on chapters 1 and 3 of the Section 1 – that's pages 19-41 in the BDC report as well as the special report on Disability. And if I could start off this discussion by thanking my colleagues in the Secretariat, who have responsibility for equality, especially David Joyce and Pauline Buchanna, and I know they are joined by many other colleagues who have a roll to play in the equality agenda in Congress. I may also thank all of the people from the individual unions, who participate in the various committees that support the equality agenda in Congress.

Colleagues, the Executive Report highlights the persistent and systematic inequality experienced by many in our society today. It gives account of the actions taken to combat such discrimination and promote equality by the trade union movement. It includes an overview of the work of the equality related committees, the partnership approaches to improve equality, the work of the Secretariat to progress the equality agenda, an overview of the flagship LIFT project, which Peter mentioned in his Presidential Address and a special trade union report on how Ireland fares in relation to infrastructure and supports to facilitate the participation of parents in the workforce. And I would like to say that notwithstanding the efforts of the movement, of all of you as members of this movement, the indicated points to the emergence of a more unequal society. When we look at the low educational attainment of thousands of workers which limits their potential to access better quality job opportunities. We look at the poor levels of participation in employment and in society generally of people with

disabilities. We look at the barriers that deny the vast majority of lone parents a chance to work or participate in further education. The unacceptably high levels of unemployment among members of the travelling community. The denial of rights and benefits to same sex couples. The experience of those facing long term economic disadvantage and their exclusion and marginalisation. The continued inequality of women manifested by their absence in senior roles and positions of power and their over representation in low paid part-time work and in jobs with poor advancement prospects.

We look at the 14 per cent gender pay gap – an issue that is exacerbated by the absence of comprehensive child care provision and supports that place Ireland at the wrong end of every comparative chart in Europe in relation to the policies and measures that facilitate the participation of those with caring responsibilities. And, worryingly, in research that we have just had undertaken for Congress funded by the European Year, we see the emergence of a migrant worker pay gap of 18 per cent which rises alarmingly to 31 per cent for those coming from non-English speaking countries. Colleague, in the face of such significant inequality we also have an intolerable situation which Niall alluded to around the resourcing of the equality infrastructure which is inadequate to cope with the demand placed upon it. It is leading to delays in some cases of years in the appointment of Equality Officers, the scheduling of hearings and the delivery of recommendations, and I know colleagues, that this has been your experience. It is not a problem which has happened over the last three months or six months or the last year or two years. It has been happening for a long, long time. And I saw it reported in the Equality Authority's Annual Report that in one case it took five and a half years for a worker to get a hearing. We have a situation where remedies for those who experience discrimination are not effective, simple or swift. To address this we demanded it and gained an inclusion of a commitment in *Towards 2016* to review the resourcing of equality infrastructure. And we are actively pursuing this. But, as our President has said, we must redouble our efforts to tackle the factors that create inequality – like the underpay or the low pay that affects hundreds of thousands of workers. Like the use of agencies to undermine the terms and conditions of all workers. We need to gain access for workers to ongoing training and life long learning that is not producible to the immediate needs of the employer. We need to seek radical measures to address the pay gaps that are widening. We need to seek the development of an infrastructure repair and the development of these and in fact you will hear more about this from my colleagues later on. And strategically we need to improve the resourcing of the equality institutions and to seek a review and improvement of existing equality legislation.

Colleagues, the pursuit of equality, as Peter said, is not embedded in our economy or in our society, but it is embedded in our movement. It is embedded in the objects of Congress. There is no other organisation on this island that has two of its key objects enshrined in its constitution about the pursuit and delivery of the equality agenda. But we also know that if we are to achieve improvements

in equality that there is only one way to do that and that is through organising workers into unions and building unions strength. Because we know in countries where there is a high union density, like in the Nordic countries, there is a smaller proportion of low paid workers, there is a more equal society, a better distribution of wealth and less inequality and discrimination. If we don't do this we are vulnerable. We are vulnerable to labour market reforms, we are vulnerable to workers being undermined, to seeing their earnings degraded, to displacement, to an erosion of the very strong standards that we struggle to achieve. It leaves us vulnerable to the perpetration of a more unequal society.

Colleagues, I am opening up this discussion now on the debate on the equality agenda and I would invite you to participate in it and to redouble the efforts in your unions at Executive level and within Congress to pursue this agenda. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I now invite Patricia McKeown to move Equality Motion 1.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress

I get a box to stand on. President, Conference, I made my first speech in Bundoran at an ICTU Conference back in 1979 and I certainly didn't think back then that I would ever be moving a motion on behalf of the Executive Council and I absolutely did not think I would be moving a motion on the issue of equality in the terms of the motion that is before you today and I am very proud of the Executive Council and very proud of our movement that we are able to place before you the analysis we do today. You already heard from Peter, you have heard from Niall, you have heard from Sally Anne. The important thing today is I think that we hear from others, particularly from those who come from the groups most disadvantaged and most discriminated against in this society. There is in this motion, it is a detailed motion as you can see, a very clear political analysis about what is wrong with this planet and what is wrong with Governments. What is wrong with living in a world where globalisation is indeed driven by unbridled capitalism, brutal, irresponsible and uncaring. And what the consequences of that are for people not only in our own country across the two jurisdictions Congress covers but also people in an even worse condition across this planet and nobody more so than women and young girls. The vast majority of exploitation on that planet is taking place in their lives.

We know from everything we have heard this morning that there are some very serious achievements, particularly in respect of equality and rights which have been gained by our movement working together over the last quarter of a century. But we also know from everything that has been said that we have an enormous mountain to climb even in our own home towns and villages throughout Ireland, let alone on the enormous global challenge facing us. But

when I did come here back in 1979, the very contested issue of equality that was on the agenda then was religious discrimination in the North of Ireland and we know twenty five years later that there have been significant strides made in challenging that. Unfortunately, those strides have tended to be much more for the middle class than they have been for the working class and the disposed. And I live in a part of the world where today in on the British Government's own admission and its own statistics, religious discrimination, disadvantage for working class Catholics still stands at the same height it did thirty years ago and disadvantage for working class Protestants has leapt by more than 16 per cent over the last decade.

So, it is the disposed, it is the poor, it is the working class, it is the women, it is the people covered by the categories in our legislation who need the support of this movement but they need more than the support of this movement. They need to be what they have the right to be – a fundamental part of this movement, members of this movement enabled by the rest of us who are able to do so, to speak for themselves and also our obligation has to be to put our efforts and our resources to target objective need and to stand up and take on Governments. To say to them where that need is most is where we want resources placed. There are those in this society who would like to see our movement categorised as greed, sectional, self-interested. We are not that. The only thing standing between the worst excesses of global capitalism and the exploitation and slavery of millions of people across this planet is our movement, our members, our determination to name it and stand up to it, because as Niall says, sometimes the word “equality” and the language of equality, the state we have arrived at in the 21st century does mask the horrors of discrimination. And the slavery that exists in this planet today and the fact that even we benefit without understanding to what extent we benefit from it.

So on behalf of the Executive Council and with great pride, and knowing what the people of this movement and across Ireland are capable of, because we saw it manifest itself in the Irish Ferries dispute and we will see it manifest itself again, I say to you this is not a pious motion, this is a motion that says our job is to recruit and organise in this movement and make the pursuit of fundamental human rights and equality of opportunity for all with no one left behind in this society, the key goal of our movement. I commend this motion to you asking not only to support it but again as Niall said, take from this week this as the core of our programme for the future. Thank you delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates, as I indicated earlier, I propose to interrupt this debate so before inviting Rosheen Callender to move Motion 2, I am going to ask John Monks, the General Secretary of the ETUC to address Conference. John, you are very welcome.

John Monks, General Secretary, ETUC

Just shift Patricia's "Tom Cruise" box out of the way.

President, delegates, fellow guests, thanks for the invitation to again visit the Biennial Congress of the ICTU and greetings to you all from the European Trade Union Confederation. I am sorry to you all – it's a flying visit that I have to make but it's probably a wise decision on my part. The last time I stayed overnight at the Irish Congress I had a hangover for three days, so I am certainly avoiding that today.

Anyway, its two years since Belfast, and much has happened in those. And some of it is good and one of them is much better than good – it's absolutely marvellous and I will mention that in a moment. But, union Conferences always take, quite rightly about the things that need to be done but maybe from the outside, and that is the perspective I bring. I bring some good news about Ireland. I see lots of good things in Ireland as well as lots of problems and the best thing I see in the island of Ireland is what's happened in the North. Because, the North of Ireland can, I think, I hope, be said to be at peace with its communities at last moving together in a forward direction. That is an objective long sought by this Congress, by the Northern Ireland Committee and I certainly second the very complimentary remarks that have been made about them. But also the trade unionists of Ireland. Sometimes, indeed, the trade unions were the only working bridge across the troubled communities of the North. And I say to you, allow yourselves a quiet smile of satisfaction and even congratulation at the leading role we played in the reconciliation and you claim fully and proudly the right to play a full part in the next phase.

Course there is other good news. The Irish economy has continued to boom, attracting migrant workers on a scale which, proportionately, is the highest in Europe. The speed of the change from country of emigration to country of immigration is breathtaking. And I note too that the Irish welcome has in general been warm and the trade union welcome has been generous. No one has been seeking transitional arrangements to try and keep people out in Ireland. And in a sense the message has been equality, to treat people as guests, to ensure that they are treated as first class workers, not as second class workers. We know there are risks of large scale exploitation of migrant workers and there are plenty of examples that unions have to confront. But you know Ireland is a beacon across Europe. The transformation in the fortunes is widely admired in the European Union. And from the back of the field to leader in 17 years – congratulations to the country and again to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the trade unions particularly in the Republic who played such a constructive role in that process. So that is an outside view and some congratulations.

And I am particularly interested also in the deal "*Towards 2016*". I have read this with considerable interest. I listened to the debate by the way on the Standing

Orders Committee earlier this morning also with considerable interest. I just have to say that I would have liked something similar in the UK in my time as General Secretary in the UK, but as many of you know, we ended a system of national discussions and agreements processes in the 1970s and we've never had another chance to re-establish such a comprehensive framework. Not easy to get, easy to lose and very hard to re-establish. And it seems to me that that process has been central to much that has been achieved in the modern Ireland over the last 17 years. And I want to add my best wishes to the LIFT programme. I am sorry I am interrupting the Equality debate with my tight schedule but I am pleased that the ETUC has played a modest part in that process and we wish it well and hope it grows in strength to strength.

And this sort of typifies the Irish success story, because Europe is playing a role in that. The structural funds originally helped a lot but not so much recently, but they never were the whole story. Other countries have had those funds without achieving anything like the same success. You know, generally for me, the central story and its biggest achievement of the EU so far has been the way that it has helped poorer countries catch up with richer ones. Ireland and Spain are current star examples of this but now there are others in the queue racing on, catching up. Estonia 10% growth rate, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Cyprus and others are following the Irish path and at last there are encouraging signs in Poland, the biggest new recent member state. And let's face it too – there are things we don't like in the single market. But the single market in the EU has played a part. Ireland's economy has benefited from the arrival of firms who want to operate Europe wide, not just serve the small Irish market. And they have brought scale and size and they have brought jobs and they have brought wealth too. And this European adventure that we are all engaged in is a practical example I believe of equality, in a world where inequality is growing between rich and poor, sometimes between men and women and in all sorts of other ways we can see that in Europe, at least, there has been trends towards equality and they are very, very precious trade union qualities.

But the strains are showing. There are plenty of dark sides of what's going on – of globalisation and indeed of the single market and I am dealing with those every day. The Irish Ferries dispute, again attracted European wide trade union attention, was an indication of what happens in a huge single market which has outstripped its social dimension. And, as the report of your Executive shows, it is not the only case. The Swedish case – that's the Laval case – that was a construction job in the Stockholm school undertaken by a Latvian company who would not observe collective agreements. And the Viking ferry case, which transport workers will know well, which is very similar to the Irish Ferries case but involves a Finnish company and Estonian workers and they showed the same thing – the tension between the free movement of labour and maintaining advanced labour standards and this tension is at the heart of the job of trade unions in Europe in the next period.

The Bolkestein Directive in its original form would have made our problem far worse. But we were able in the ETUC with your help and with the help of unions across Europe, able to knock out the worrying feature of that directive – the principle that businesses could act across the EU according to the principle of the country of origin. In other words, say a Latvian company in Sweden would have applied Latvian laws and Latvian rules, a British company in France, British laws and British rules. That would have triggered acceleration in the race to the bottom but we, together, stronger together, managed to stop it. We took the offensive and we won it and that is what we must continue to do because there is no shortage of conflicts. Actually we won in the legal processes in the first round in the Laval and Viking cases with the results of the advocates general of the European Court of Justice. The full hearing will be in the autumn this year. But there are elements in the Commission and some member states who want the EU to be the champion of enforcing economic liberalism, just the market, across Europe.

And I have to say sadly that the UK Government, is one of these. Negotiating, as Peter said, just over a week ago, an opt-out from the new Reform Treaty, concerning the Charter of Fundamental Rights. You know that Charter provides for a Europe-wide right to organise, to negotiate – that's important in the Irish context given some of the legal judgements recently, a right to social dialogue, and crucially also a right to strike. For the UK – my country, indeed for the Labour Party – my party, to protect the Thatcher laws on strikes in this way against the Charter is absolutely deplorable, and I hope that you, in fact I am counting on you to lend your strength to the campaign against the opt-out with the Taoiseach tomorrow and in the North of Ireland too.

Ireland seems very likely to have a referendum on the new Treaty. You will find it very complicated when you look at it. Overall but just let me say that the alternative to a yes vote is a period where Europe will be in the doldrums again, it will cease to work properly, we won't get anything moving on the social front and it will be partially paralysed until it finds a way forward. And so we are looking at it all the time really – we find new things every day but we are taking a positive view of the progress that was made. We have secured our central objective that the Charter of Fundamental Rights is binding on member states – except, deplorably, for the UK, and we want to take full advantage of that. So if a Treaty is concluded this autumn, this Congress will need to play its part in the processes of ratification and it is not easy moving Social Europe forward but let's not miss the chance this time.

Other issues at the top of my desk are flexicurity and a European Green Paper on Labour Law. Flexicurity is an inelegant word which originated in Denmark to describe how that country very interestingly transformed itself and transformed its economy by a mixture of labour market and employment policies which helped the unemployed back into work quickly. They gave very high unemployment benefits but also a very high level of training and vocational guidance.

In fact the Nordic countries, all of them in their different ways, are good at it, the rest of us are rather less good at it. In this North West sector of Europe, we are good at the flexibility, we are not so good at the security, and we have got the pressures on occupational pensions with employers shifting the risks onto the worker or onto the state away from them, we have got the relative ease of hire and fire laws, and we have got weaknesses in lifelong learning systems.

The flexicurity exercise is not aimed at us, it is aimed at countries which are different, where the unemployment pay is very generous and labour laws are very supportive of workers. But there are suggestions, not least from the new French President, that this security in change measures would be weakened, so flexicurity is a huge political issue in some countries – one to watch very carefully.

And we will be upholding the twin approach. We want security, we recognise the need for change, we want security in change for sure and we will be combating all those economic liberals who see Europe's future having to be based on weaker welfare states, less public services and not strengthening worker rights. And we will be campaigning too, and I was glad about the response to this in an earlier speech, for the desperately needed Directive on Agency Workers. That is absolutely crucial in this world of migrant workers moving around the countries of Europe. And this is where Ireland is in the dock as well as the UK. Because Ireland has joined the UK in blocking this particular measure. But you know, to regulate migration properly and agencies are at the heart of all that is going on, to have decent standards, to have better traffic rules if you like, to promote equality between workers, between the men and women and between migrant and indigenous workers, equality for all in the phase that you are using today, we need this Directive and I am counting on your help to try and get it. At least as far as the Irish dimension is concerned.

I want to mention one more feature of the European social model. President, in your speech and also in David Begg's thoughtful introduction to the report of the Executive Council there is a mention of 'casino capitalism' – this huge rise in the scale of the wildest animals of financial capitalism, these new Pirates of the Caribbean who maraud in Europe and pay their taxes, if any, in the Caribbean. Today, private equity owns one sixth of the UK's private sector and the dominant model, as many of you will know, is to acquire a business largely, by borrowing, sell assets and hiding off the weaker performing areas, and then sell off the main business, slim down, research and development training, pensions probably cut on the way – all within three to four years, about one sixth of the British private sector. Hedge funds, by the way, are even more short term. They are dealing on the basis of a day, a week, a month is a long time. They have assets, by the way, equal to value of Brazil's GDP.

Now this new capitalism cannot be right. There have been some superb union campaigns in the UK against these pirates, and I pick out the GMB for a special mention in despatches. Maybe there will be a change in the tax regime from Gordon Brown's Government. I certainly hope so. But just as the Irish Government are nervous about doing anything really decisive (for example on trade union recognition) which might put off Foreign Direct Investment, so private equity and hedge funds threaten to emigrate if their privileges are touched.

For me, this is where Europe should come in. Europe is big enough to get a grip. The German Presidency would have liked to have done so. When I saw Chancellor Merkel, she was critical of hedge funds in particular and, her deputy, Vice Chancellor Müntefering, has accurately called them "locusts".

But others are opposing this. Not just the industry itself, not just the financial interests of London and Dublin and some others, but also Charlie McCreevy, the EU Commissioner, is proving to be a stalwart defender of the status quo and the present system. So Charlie McCreevy's views and people who think like him must be taken on and this must be our next Europe wide campaign. Social partnership will never thrive when employers' actions are being dictated by the rules of the racetrack and the casino

Finally, I want to mention the organising challenge. The ETUC is seeking to what it can to step up its efforts in member countries to help reverse the more or less general decline in union membership, particularly among the young. I was struck with what the delegate from Sligo Trades Council said in his welcoming remarks this morning about that. I notice the work you are doing in the Irish Congress and I hope that in the years ahead in the ETUC we will develop the capacity across Europe to organise on a large scale, the migrants, they young, the workers in the private services sector.. They need us but frankly we need them to secure the trade union future, to secure strong trade unions in the future and not leave the field open to all these casino capitalists who have been growing in power, strength and scale in recent years.

So, in the words of the ETUC slogan at our recent Congress – we are going on the offensive. For the workers of Ireland, for the workers of Europe, for the workers of the world – and, by the way, I very much like the recommendation of your Executive that the Irish Congress should join the new International TUC. It needs you to help it increase its impact on behalf of workers who are far worse off in the world than anybody in the European Union. So, congratulations on that recommendation – I hope it carries among the rest of you. So, together lets get stronger together – let's hit back, together let's take the offensive.

Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates, on your behalf the General Secretary wants to make a brief response. Before he does can I tell you that a large set of keys was deposited up on this table about 2 hours ago so we have been asked to make the announcement in order to put owner out of their misery. So if you are missing a set of keys they are here. David

David Begg, General Secretary, Congress

President, John, I want to thank you for taking the time to come to us today to make that very impressive speech. It captures quite a lot of the work of the ETUC and colleagues may know that I have the privilege of representing the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on the Executive Committee of the ETUC and so I get to see first hand the excellent work that John does. And while he has covered all the basics. I think he has understated his own role very considerably in, for example, the fight against the Services Directive. I can recall, probably eighteen months or so ago, having a meal with John in Brussels, after which he was getting into a car to travel to Paris to meet Jacques Chirac to talk to him about the Services Directive. And if the truth be known the Services Directive was beaten because it was possible to get the support of some key players in Europe at a political level to fight against it. And it is so important to have people of the calibre of John that can gain access to the people like Chirac and like Angela Merkel in order to influence them on the policy stance that they take in Europe. That is something that you know you cannot buy that type of credibility. Similarly if I may say so, on the casino capitalism – John you may or may not have noticed but you get a mention in the Executive Council motion, which may or may not be a good thing from your point of view, but anyway you are in it as being the person campaigning against this. But more importantly, probably, there was an article in the Financial Times after John made that speech where he identified the modern mutation of capitalism in this way – it was the memorial lecture for Aneurin Bevan in London some months ago, and the Financial Times actually wrote an article which was most unusual of them – the most liberal of liberal newspapers in the financial world, where they said, look this man has been a force of moderation and reason for a great many years and when he tells us there is something wrong with the system its time we sat up and listened. Now that is influence that is very, very hard to get and we are very lucky John to have you at the head of the European TUC and I can assure you that in your work in the coming years, you will continue to have the full and total support of the Irish Congress in whatever you want to do.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, thanks very much John and delegates. I know you have to depart. Can I now invite Rosheen Callender to move motion 2 on behalf of the Executive Council.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President, Congress

Thank you. Rosheen Callender, SIPTU and Vice President of Congress. Before John escapes out the door, I just want to add my words of congratulations and say how great it was to hear you speak and to assure you that we will do our utmost to rise to the challenges that you have posed to us, because we do in fact at this stage see ourselves as leaders and champions of fundamental rights wherever and equality for all. So thank you John for your words and safe home.

Now I am proposing motion No 2 on Gender Equality and I just want to say that really within the broad equality agenda, the issue of gender equality really does continually to feature disproportionately, it continues to dominate our thought to trouble a lot of us greatly and seriously frustrate us I think in a lot of our efforts. Because despite the fact that so many people now think that women after 30 years in the equality legislation and all the rest have already achieved equal pay and equal status with men. The truth is that we haven't even succeeded in my view in measuring the real extent of inequality never mind eliminating it.

When I started working in the former Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in the early 70's, equal pay for men and women was the big issue. Opposition to the then Irish Government's attempts to derogate from the first equal pay directive was the big campaign of the time and it was driven by women trade unionists and many of the progressive male colleagues. It was one of things that made me want to work full time for the trade union movement. I didn't imagine that I would work almost my entire working life in the trade union movement but it was the fact that unions were up and running at the forefront of that campaign that really drew me to the trade union movement.

Now those days in the 70's the gender pay gap as it is now called, the gap between men and women's earnings, was around 25 and we all thought that was totally unacceptable. Likewise the lack of good affordable childcare which we used to call crèches in those days and likewise the absence of paid maternity leave and a lot of other things that still haven't been achieved. In fact the 1975 Working Women's Charter, which was adopted at the 1976 Annual Delegate Conference of this Congress, called for about a dozen key reforms including 26 weeks paid maternity leave and believe it or not over thirty years later that's actually the only one of those dozen demands that has been fully achieved and just this year. The gender pay gap is still about 14 or 15 per cent. As Sally Anne said, we have got a lot better at measuring it, better at understanding the reasons

for it but in my view not sufficiently so yet. We have understood the concept of double and multiple discrimination which the motion at the outset refers to. The special obstacles to equality, for example that are faced by older women or migrant women or women with disabilities. But I think we still haven't fully incorporated all elements of the equality agenda into our view of and our way of measuring the so called gender pay gap and I think that a truer indication of real gender inequality would be an attempt to measure what I call the gap with two "p" that's gender and pay and pensions. Even that does not go far enough but it would give us an idea of the cumulative effect of women's lower pay throughout their working lives which tend to be shorter on a paid basis anyway due to longer absences, unpaid absences, from the paid workforce would give us a better idea of the cumulative effects of women's occupational segregation being tied into industries that are generally lower paid. Women whose promotional prospects again due to absences from the paid workforce in those crucial childbearing and child rearing years and then of course on equal access to good pension arrangements, again often related to the nature of women's employment, and the indirectly discriminatory design of most occupational pension schemes which still fail to, normally anyway, to give credits for periods of unpaid leave for family reasons. So you really need to measure and compare men and women's total income over the entire life course to get a real idea of the extent of gender inequality and the challenges that still lie ahead of us in building a society of true equality between the sexes.

I think that the trade union movement in Ireland North and South has managed to develop very comprehensive, very holistic strategies, the best there are for ending sex discrimination and achieving gender equality and last year's national agreement as previously I have had said, actually adopts a life cycle approach. It tries to link all the relevant issues at the different ages and stages of our lives from childcare to eldercare, from work life balance to flexicurity, from equal pay and income inequality, to equal opportunities in the broader sense. But our slow progress in actually achieving those objectives and achieving the equality is still frustrating to say the least. We made good progress at national level in various national agreements, the national framework committees for example to which Neil has refereed on Work life Balance and on Equality Opportunities at the level of the work place. Those have all been very important and especially the funding that has been used to generate initiatives at local level. The National Minimum Wage another hugely important achievement of the Trade Union Movement and a big contributor to narrowing the gender pay gap raft of good labour laws and most recently a new agency dedicated to actually enforcing them. Major, major achievements for men as well as women but all our efforts at this stage need to be re-doubled. We need to use all the various instruments at our disposal at every level not just national but also sectoral and especially at work place level to demonstrate that we really are really serious about securing things like high quality childcare that is affordable by all parents, high quality health and social services including elder care, work life balance, the quality of life issues that now days concern just as many workers as do the traditional pay concerns that are

so easy, as we know, eroded by inflation and the high cost of what are often poor quality services. I think that the more we demonstrate our commitment to achieving what I call high quality equality, the levelling down to the lowest common denominator, no race to the bottom, actually achieving high level, high quality equality. The more we demonstrate our real commitment to progressive change in that direction the more women and young people and vulnerable workers generally will gravitate towards our movement in the knowledge that we are serious about achieving new things. So for the future of our movement, delegates, I ask you to strongly support this motion not only with your hands when you vote but with your hearts, your minds, your souls, your entire beings and most of all your actions in the years ahead. Thank you.

Peter Mc Loone, President of Congress

Can I just ask for a formal seconder to this and then I am going to invite that we move Motion 3 and then we all make contributions, ok?

Pamela Dooley, Unison and Chair of the ICTU Committee Northern Ireland.

Pamela Dooley, Unison and Chair of the ICTU Committee Northern Ireland. Seconding motion 2. President, Delegates I want to open by congratulating the Executive Council for making Equality For All the theme of the 2007 conference. Coming as I do from a deeply divided, deeply discriminated society, it reaffirms my belief that if we are to change the patterns of discrimination in Northern Ireland across both jurisdictions then our movement must be the driver for that change. Niall Crowley, our two women Vice Presidents and our affiliates have set the scene, but no one body knows better what kind of ill divided society we live in than those amongst our members and their families who live in deepest disadvantage. All of the detailed reports and all of the worthy motions count for nothing if we cannot change their lives' experience. That is our challenge, that is where we need to go into action. I want to focus on the conditions of women in Ireland North and South. I particularly want to focus on women as the majority in every category of disadvantaged, the low paid women, the privatised women, the contracted out women, the black and ethnic minority women, the traveller women, the women trapped as unpaid carers, the women silently screaming with mental health problems, the women with disabilities left without support, women beaten, brutalised, trafficked, raped and murdered on our doorsteps, lesbian women denied their rights, women single parents denied support, women denied rights over their own bodies, young denied their aspirations and opportunities, older women most likely to be living in poverty, life expectance dropping for women, dropping in these categories across the Ireland, women who labour is continually valued at less than that of men. In naming them I do not deny the plait of those men who also share discrimination and disadvantage but the lion's share of multiple and discrimination in our society still falls on the shoulders of women. Many of these women are members of unions but many more are not and we have to rise to the challenge of convincing them that we stand in direct opposition to everything in our society that is causing their aspersion. I have

been a delegate to many of these conferences over the years. Sometimes I have witnessed the near hysteria when some unions, mostly my own, have set down controversial motions. I remember when part-time workers' rights or the minimum wage, but mostly reserved seats for women would send people into trauma. But thankfully we have moved beyond those times.

However, today I worry about something else; it seems to me that the struggle for equality and fundamental human rights especially for women has become mechanistic. I worry that many unions and even Congress often think that the struggle for equality is about soft middle class options for some but not for all. I stand here to reaffirm that all the women I am describing are real human beings in this society. They are entitled that our movement will take on Governments on their behalf. I stand here ready on behalf of the ICTU Women's Committee and my own union to take the campaigns forward not as words but difficult deeds and I call on Congress and all the unions to pledge today to make change a reality at the bargaining table in our union structures and in our dealings with Governments North and South. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I now call on John Carr to move Motion 3 - People With Disabilities

John Carr, General Secretary INTO

Go raibh maith agat a Uchatrian. The attention span of the average adult is 15 seconds, after which time you tend to drift in and out of the world of fantasy. Having already heard several speeches, two motions, you are now probably hopelessly adrift somewhere off the sea of the Fiji Islands or somewhere. For the next few moments, however, I appeal to you to drop those anchors and to re-enter the world, the real living world of people with disabilities in Ireland. And to establish a clear picture of people with disabilities in work, it is important to appreciate that most people with a disability were not born with it although they experience certain barriers, job related barriers, nor do they acquire disability as a result of occupational injury or accident. Only one in six report the onset of a disability as being work related. Most people working with a disability have acquired it during their working lives which mean that most people with a disability have already got work experience – a factor which is not widely appreciated.

So we are therefore talking about people who encounter barriers to gaining employment, those whose opportunities in the workplace are restricted by disability and those who are forced to make an early exit from employment. And while more attention tends to be given to people with a physical disability we must always include those people with mental health problems as well in our deliberations.

Too many people with a disability are often at risk of poverty and social inclusion because of our failure as a society to adapt existing working patterns or to provide more flexible and transitional working arrangements. We are at fault. Too many people with a disability often experience a diminished quality of life or they live lives of unfulfilled potential because of our reluctance as a society to give them unfettered access to modern social services and infrastructures. And too many people with a disability are often confined to lives of state dependency because we as a society permit it and we condone it. What can we do therefore? This year will be one of the most important years in the struggle to gain real equality for people with disabilities. It is the European Year of Equal Opportunities For All. Congress and all trade unionists must mark this year by having a special focus on equality at branch level and trade union conferences during the year, including this conference. Mere rhetoric is no longer an option. A call to action is now urgent and imperative.

Also this year, the Irish Government has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. A new UN Committee and Human Rights for persons with a disability will be established to access periodic reports from states on progress under the treaty. The new treaty covers a wide range of areas, including employment, accessibility, education, and freedom from exploitation, independent living and a right to be recognised as a person before the law. The commitments of the Irish Government to the Convention will compliment the national disability strategy which aims to develop an integrated approach to promoting equality and social inclusion and providing service provision for people with disabilities. The Government and the Social Partners agreed that the implementation of the disability strategy should be the focus of policy in this area over the lifetime of *Towards 2016*. We must therefore redouble our efforts to make sure that those commitments in *Towards 2016* are delivered for people with disabilities. Creating a society and workplace that are inclusive for people with disabilities remains a major challenge. And the role of the trade union movement is in creating that society has never, never been more important.

Congress adopted the Code of Practice for trade unions on people with disabilities which is intended for use by us as trade unions to enable us to fulfil our duties as employers and service providers. Let's look into our own hearts and see how we have adopted this code not alone in our places of work but also in our own union structures.

As part of the implementation of these guidelines, the coming year will see the role out of the Disability Champions Program, which will result in a network of training disability champions within the trade union movement, North and South. Congress also works with IBEC in promoting the Workway Website: www.workway.ie, which is one of the most comprehensive websites on disability and employment in Ireland. But when all is said and done, unemployment remains a major issue for people with disabilities. The state must be exhorted at every opportunity to take a central role and make a greater effort to raise the

level of education and training among people with disabilities. There must be a better response from the public service and the private sector to make greater efforts to achieve the 3% employment target in the public service, to establish recruitment targets for the private sector and to adequately support people in sheltered workshops replacing the system of payments of benefits with proper pay and conditions of employment and proper support to offset the cost of disability.

Finally, there must be an end to the indeterminable debate about the “Hobson Choice” faced by most people with a disability – when they are required to give up medical cards and other essential support if they take up any form of employment, even part-time. No one, no one with a disability should be obliged to hand over their medical card when they enter the job market. No one with a disability should be denied access to essential support services. And no one with a disability should be excluded from the workplace because we cannot rearrange our work practices. Active measures for integration depend on a wide variety of intervention from both inside and outside the workplace. Its time that we became more proactive, more demanding and more forceful in our endeavours to achieve greater access to the job market where people with disabilities, both within and outside our respective organisations, and now you can dream on. Go raibh maith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

I am now going to ask Joe Roe to formally second the motion and to speak on it and then we will take the discussion on Motions 1, 2 and 3.

Joe Roe, CPSU

Joe Roe, CPSU formally seconding Motion No 3. Delegates, it is time for the trade union movement to get active as regards disability. We need to be preaching and proactive in what we are trying to achieve. We are trying to get people into the workplace. The labour market is getting to a point where we don't have enough people to fill the vacancies. The thousands of disabled people who, given the right support and encouragement, could fill those vacancies. Delegates, it should not only fall to the civil service to have a 3%, the public sector should also be taking up the 3% and delegates, the private sector, many of whom benefit from tax income from us taxpayers, don't have any quota. They should also be taking up their percentage. Delegates, I didn't choose to be disabled. It happened but there are other people out there who are probably more qualified than I am who are sitting at home with very active minds doing nothing. We have also got to look at the benefit trap. When I came into the civil service, and I don't want to personalise this, I had to give up my medical card. People still have to do that if they go over a certain earnings limit.

Delegates, I urge all unions here today to actively move on this motion to enable other less fortunate people to enter the workplace.

Thank you delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

There are a number of speakers showing who I think want to make contributions to Motions 1, 2 and 3, so I will invite you in whatever order you chose to come and make those points.

Speaker Not Identified

President, delegates, in this the European Year of Equal Opportunities For All, I call on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to negotiate a proper tax credit for home carers. This tax credit was first introduced to the hues and outcry after the introduction of tax individualisation by former Finance Minister McCreevy. One of the most retrograde measures ever introduced into our tax system. It undermines and devalues the work of the parent who opts to stay at home to care for his or her children. The home carers' tax credit of €770 has remained frozen since 2001. Such an insult to the spouse who decides to remain at home. To put it simply, a dual income couple pays tax at the top rate at 68,000 whereas the sole earner hits the top rate at 43,000. This unjust tax individualisation has led to dramatic transfers from one spouse working families to dual income households. Some economic experts have calculated the loss or penalty on one working spouse families to be in the region of 6,000 per annum. I call on ICTU to redress this situation as a matter of urgency.

Another area of inequality is our public service two tiered pension scheme. Recent entrants to our pension scheme have much worse conditions than their older colleagues. Our Seanad candidate, Bernadette O'Sullivan, has been very vocal and consistent in highlighting this grave inequality.

I urge Congress and you delegates to redress the adverse treatment of the family with one spouse working and wipe out this blatant inequality and work towards a more just pension system in the public service. Thank you very much delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates, four others showing so could I ask you to come forward but try and keep your comments brief because I want to do this introduction of this LIFT video before we break for lunchtime. Ok, come forward, if you can at all.

Carmel Kerrigan, Amicus

President, delegates and distinguished guests, Carmel Kerrigan, Amicus supporting equality Motion 1 of the Executive Council, and welcoming the European Year of Equal Opportunities For All, with development of policies to ensure every person would enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination. A vision also included in the Partnership agreement *Towards 2016*.

The Central Statistics Office has highlighted significant inequalities in Ireland, around a wide range of issues, with discrimination on the basis of age the most common grievance to come before the Equality Authority. And that is a particular issue on which I wish to speak. There must be a bond of solidarity with those who will elderly tomorrow and a much greater level of public awareness is called for at Government level to ensure the legislation is effective. I am aware that many organisations and clubs discriminate against older people, the retired, and exclude them from membership. And where organisations are concerned not a “gold watch scenario” of a life of self-giving but cold shoulder on a wealth of experience. If anyone is aware of any such circumstances I would like to recommend that they contact the Retired Members Committee of Congress who are participating in a campaign with the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, to enable older, the older age group to continue to contribute and participate in society. Thank you Mr President for the opportunity and I ask conference to support the motion. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you very much.

Judy Linton, UNISION

Chair, delegates, Judy Linton, UNISION supporting Motion 2 on Gender Equality. In Ireland, North and South, Government continues to refuse to give hard commitments to reduce gender inequality. This inequality is visible in the structure of a labour market which refused to adequately resource flexibility through childcare, maternity and paternity leave. It is visible in the continued denial of equality, equal pension rights to low paid, part-time women workers. Many of whom have opted for flexible working in order to find a balance between the demands of home and work. It is particularly visible in fact that women continue to earn 85 per cent of men’s gross weekly earnings including overtime. Systemic change will not come whilst the representation of women on public bodies and in key decision making decisions fall short of the proportionality. It will not be achieved whilst women continue to carry the burdens of poverty, health, equality, care and domestic violence. As a union with 80 per cent female membership, UNISION continues to, in all key areas, in the fight for equality. We do so through our own democratic structures through the wider trade union

movement and a wide range of women's groups in the community. Equality, moral and motivation go hand in hand with equal pay conditions and contractual rights. As a trade union movement ending this discrimination has to be a priority. However, it is also essential that we put our own house in order and tackle the under representation of women in our own structure. Congress must spearhead a programme of action to set targets to set an increase of women trade unionists, particularly those who are part-time and low paid. We must set a standard and recognise our ways of working to fit these needs. I urge you to support this motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates, with your agreement can I call the votes on Motions 1, 2 and 3 at this stage and the relevant sections of the Executive Council Report in order that we can have this video this side of lunchtime. Is that agreed? Agreed, ok.

The vote on Motion 1 on behalf of the Executive Council – all those in favour please show. Is there anyone against? Any abstentions? It's carried.

Motion 2 on Gender Equality in the name of the Executive Council. - all those in favour please show. Is there anyone against? Any abstentions? It's carried.

Motion 3 on People with Disabilities - all those in favour please show. Is there anyone against? Any abstentions? It's carried.

Can I call on your approval to adopt the relevant sections of the Executive Council Report as listed there on the agenda. Are those agreed? Agreed ok.

Can I now invite Catherine Byrne, the Chairperson of LIFT to speak on the LIFT Project and to speak on the promotional DVD and to launch it on union activism that they want to launch at this conference – Catherine.

Catherine Byrne, Executive Council and LIFT

Thank you very much President. Colleagues, I speak here today as Chair of the LIFT project but also as a member of the Executive Council of Congress and it's a great pleasure for me to introduce this video, but to also introduce I hope a debate that will take place not just in the hall of conference but outside about the whole issue of leadership and the trade union movement. It is a particular pleasure because this is my last conference as a delegate and I have been attending conferences and speaking at them for I suppose more than twenty years. And it's true to say that over those twenty years ICTU conferences have debated and adopted progressive policies and promoted a range of strategies on the participation of women in the trade union movement. It's fair to say that during those decades also the profile of women in trade unions has changed significantly for the positive. The numbers of women in trade unions have

increased reflecting their increased participation in the labour market but unfortunately not at the same pace as their workplace participation. There is no doubt that the voice and visibility of members in trade unions has also improved. The evidence of this improvement can be seen here at this conference today from the top table right down to the number of delegates in the hall. There are more women on Executive Councils, more women on the Executive Council of Congress, more women at a senior level driving policy and organisational change and to a lesser extent, but just as important and significant, more women negotiating on the national stage and representing the movement in the media. And yes there are stubborn black spots. I think it is only fair to say that we are unfortunately still some distance away from the day where our Biennial Conference and this movement will be able to celebrate the presence of several women General Secretaries in the audience and maybe even a woman as the head of Congress. These are legitimate and desirable targets for this movement and they will come to pass. But the LIFT project is designed for much more than that. It is designed to develop a road map that will help to speed up the process of change at a leadership level of the unions but more importantly, that will build stronger relationships between women and unions at every single level. It would be impossible to expect that the LIFT Project, working over three years, that it could have designed itself in a way that it would achieve change within its lifetime. But I believe that the real legacy of LIFT will lie in its capacity to support the development of a stronger and more inclusive trade union movement through building excellence in leadership and better organisation.

The success of LIFT lies in the fact that it is multi-faceted – that it tackles an age old problem from a range of different angles. That it sets about revitalising, re-energising and refocusing this movement with new thinking and innovation on the relationships between women and trade unions and leadership.

We use research, training, networking, mentoring, strategic conversations, coaching and a development of a DVD about promoting women's involvement in unions – these are just some of the tools in a programme that has been both intensive and comprehensive in its nature. The results of the research you can read in your document from page 47 to 51 of the Congress Report. The results of this research have provided great insight that has influenced and driven the shape of the project. In its modular leadership training programme, which is being delivered to 30 women who have been sponsored by their General Secretaries and their unions – 20 in the south and 10 in Northern Ireland – has not only been of great personal and professional benefit to those women, but has provided new insights into our understandings of leadership excellence, and will become a blueprint for future trade union leadership development programmes. A series of lunchtime networking events and workshops for women who are at the earlier stages of engagement in trade unions, especially migrant women workers, young women and women in atypical jobs in traditional male sectors, have been inspirational and creative resulting in participants setting up their own transport network and producing a four minute DVD which we will launch in a few

moments. A DVD that has been done at low cost, designed and scripted and acted out by women participants. The series of strategic conversations, which Peter spoke about earlier, has been hugely successful. It has been successful not only in creating a new forum for General Secretaries away from the pressures of decision making to reflect on the big strategic issues for the movement, but in my opinion more importantly, it has brought the LIFT project and women right to the heart of decision making in the trade union movement. It has moved the issue from the margins to the centre.

Finally, colleagues, about the future. This programme will be subject to a comprehensive and an external evaluation in the coming months. From there the board of LIFT, and it gives me an opportunity to thank our colleagues in the IPA and the National Centre for Partnership & Performance, we will put together a series of recommendations for the Executive Council of Congress for the mainstreaming of LIFT in Congress, which in effect will provide this movement with a set of strategic tools that can be used to support the development of excellence in leadership in the trade union movement in Ireland at this time of great challenge.

And I leave the final words in opening this discussion on leadership and women and LIFT to the women trade unionists on the DVD, Women and Trade Unions Stronger Together – the brainchild and creation of the participants of the LIFT programme. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Something is going to appear on the screen.

LIFT PRESENTATION

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Just before drawing this session to a close, can I thank you for the courtesy that you extended the speakers during what has been a very busy morning. Apologies to both Rhonda and to Berni who were to speak on behalf of their respected committees. We hope we can reschedule that later on in the conference and apologies to the movers of 4,5,6 that we didn't get around to your motions.

On Thursday afternoon we have a special session on the health service and those unions that propose to table questions to the panel are asked to make those questions available by Tuesday evening to the staff of the Congress. Also, union who haven't picked up the tickets for the dinner in Harvey's Point this evening are asked to do so by collecting those tickets at the registration desk.

We hope we can resume promptly at 2.30pm. This is the private session and it will be for delegates only.

Thank you very much delegates – enjoy your lunch.

Lunch Adjournment until 2.30pm

**Tuesday 3 July
Afternoon Session**

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I ask everyone who is in the hall to take a seat and could I ask that the doors would be closed to eliminate the noise from outside, which automatically means we can't have any noise inside in the hall, folks.

Ok, it's a final call to everyone who is in the hall to take a seat please.

Alright, I am going to commence and I am going to call, we are dealing with Finance and Organisation with the Section 2, Chapter 1 of the EC Report which is at page 43, and I am going to call on Joe O'Flynn, the Treasurer to introduce the financial statement. I think this will be a powerpoint presentation.

Joe O'Flynn, Treasurer of Congress

Colleagues, President, General Secretary, delegate, first of all could I just mention the support of my own union SIPTU for the nomination again as Treasurer of Congress, and acknowledge and thank the affiliates for the support in being re-elected as Treasurer. I think this particular issue, finances, won't necessarily feature as the highlight of the week at conference, however, nevertheless it is a very critical area of our activity within Congress, in that if we are to continue to support the activity of the affiliates to defend the rights of workers in this country we need to be able to resource Congress in a fashion that delivers a professional support to the affiliates and to the workers of Ireland.

I want to take you through the audited accounts briefly for the years 2005 and 2006 which are the years under review. And I want to basically touch on the main Congress account which is Account No 1 which deals with the affiliation

fees and other expenditure within Congress, the No 2 Account which is the Training Educational Advisory Account and then the two other accounts here – the Northern Ireland Training Services Account and the Northern Ireland Work Study Advisory Service Account and I want to highlight the main changes, colleagues, in some of the headlines within the accounts which you will find, I think it is on page 139 of the BDC Report itself. I also want to highlight some of the significant monetary changes that are within the accounts for you, so that will create I think a good awareness of how the funds of Congress are being managed.

First of all under the No 1 Account under the heading of “Income”, there was an improvement there in relation in relation to the affiliation fees mainly reflected in the fact that we had an affiliation fee increase agreed at the last BDC and that resulted in a significant monetary increase on the affiliation fees and that was supported by the fact that the Congress affiliated membership has increased for both 2005 and 2006 by about 30,000 financial members in each of the two financial years so overall about 61,000 addition members have been affiliated to Congress since the beginning of 2,005.

We also have under the Grant & Project line a new income line to reflect the level of activity and to give greater transparency to the affiliates in respect of income. The 358,126 income is from a number of sources including the Department of Foreign Affairs for our activities in Northern Ireland, funding from the BDC which was held in Belfast in 2005 and project money has assisted towards salaries. Other income, 301,292 – you will see that particular line – that is an increase mainly due to income from unions towards the Irish Ferries and the Labour Standards campaign and income from Laganside Development towards refurbishment of the Congress Belfast office. This income line also includes monies passed through Congress by unions for legal actions as well as income from board fees and travel refunds and the monies have passed through Congress for legal actions from the unions – that’s a contra item and it will be shown as an expenditure, corresponding expenditure item as we go through the accounts.

On expenditure, I suppose the significant increase under Staff Costs relates to a number of factors. First of all the two new posts which were created in the Belfast office last year, project related salary costs which was reflected in the Grant and Project income, which I referred to, as well as the standard cost of living and incremental increases due to the staff during the period of review.

Under the title of Motor and Travel, the difference here is due to better capturing of expenditure which had been included under other expenditure such as Sundries, Conferences etc previously. And under Legal and Professional – this includes the Northern Ireland Review, the Strategic Equality Review, accountancy costs and payment of monies passed through Congress by unions for legal actions to which I referred already.

Activity cost of 298,065 euros – this is a new expenditure line to facilitate outgoings on activities reflected as additional income under Grant and Project and Other Income. The main activities included the Department of Foreign Affairs assisted activities, Congress funding obligations to projects, research, policy briefing papers and launches. Under the heading Advertising you will see that there is a significant increase under that particular line in 2005 and that relates primarily to the Irish Ferries activities and the protest marches which were organised under the auspices of Congress in relation to labour standards and employment rights and significantly in relation to the Irish Ferries protest marches throughout the country.

The waiver of the Northern Ireland loan – this was an internal loan colleagues which our auditors had asked us to clear and it relates to an overspend on two funded accounts which had been carried forward in the accounts since the year 2001 and obviously we have had to deal with that now as a result of a request from the auditors.

On the No 2 Account which is the Training Advisory Services, the increased income here is from income received from the Department towards advisory education and training services. There is also under Participant's Fees an increase which reflects the increased activities by Congress and unions under this particular area of activity.

Under CIE – these are monies received in 2006 for the year 2005 but there are still monies outstanding for 2005 and 2006 and the Grant and Project Income – that's a new line which is split from other income, again for transparency purposes, and this is mainly money taken from projects towards salaries and other overheads.

On expenditure, again similar to the No 1 Account we have increases related to the cost of living and incremental increases. The Motor and Travel again similarly greater transparency in capturing that information and recording it under Motor and Travel.

Under Research and Consulting this is a new line and its major expenditure item is the cost of developing the ICT system to support the skills development and organising activities.

The training courses again reflect the increased activity, both in Congress and across the affiliated unions.

Then to come to the Overview, President, at the end of 2006 we had a modest surplus of 275,622 on the main account – the No 1 account. Unfortunately, that was more than offset by a deficit in the No 2 Account of 278,275 euros and so the consolidated position resulted in a small deficit of 2,653 euros. Now when

you look at the overall finances, colleagues, you are looking at about 5.75 million euros and we really are borderline in terms of the operation of Congress, in terms of the margins that we are operating within. And I think you will find that notwithstanding the tremendous management, particularly under Sally Anne Kinahan, the Assistant General Secretary, and the other staff in Congress has been very, very difficult to keep the finances under control. And the funding is completely inadequate, I suggest, to enable us to increase the activity or to develop strategic areas of work. There are a number of risks which still remain, albeit as I said we are still operating on a very tight line, but these risks relate to first of all the starting area. Between the Dublin and Belfast offices there are thirty seven members of staff, twenty one of which are either partly or fully funded by projects or program activities. These include both Assistant General Secretaries, the Economic Advisor, both Equality Officers and most of the staff involved in the skill development, education and training activities. That is not a very comfortable position for Congress to be in. Several other staff members are funded to work full time on time bound projects.

On the staff pension scheme – no different than many of the affiliates here and indeed in the private sector – there has been a substantial problem in relation to the pension fund of Congress, both for the Dublin staff and the Belfast staff, and we are showing a deficit of approximately 2 million euros in respect of both pension funds.

The organisation, as I have said, is constrained by lack of funding and I would intend to deal with that significantly when I come back to propose motion 8 to the delegates. So at this juncture President I'd like to commend the accounts for adoption at Congress and I would like to again reiterate the heartfelt thanks both from myself as Treasurer of Congress but mainly on behalf of the affiliates to Sallyanne and to the staff on Congress who have had to turn around the finances over the past couple of years in a very signification way by a lot of re-organisation, by a lot of hard work and a lot of dedication to commitment to detail.

So thanks to Sally Anne and the rest of the staff in Congress for a job very well done.

Go mile maith agat

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

I have no indication of any speakers so can I put the Financial Statement to Conference for approval.

All those agreed. Ok anyone against and any abstentions? Ok the Financial Statement to the Conference is approved. Before calling on Joe to move Motion 8, can I just announce that Fergus Whelan and Liam Berney will be exchanging

credential cards subs for voting cards throughout the afternoon over here to my left at the exit. Ok we are ready to precede with motion 8 which is the amended to the constitution the affiliation fees. Call Joe.

Joe O'Flynn, Treasurer of Congress

President, Colleagues can I draw your attention specifically to Motion 8 in your agenda and in proposing the motion I want to outline some of the background in relation to which will compliment I suppose the Financial Report these will read the accounts for 2005 and 2006 but there is a longer history in respect of the precarious position that Congress finds itself in presently.

As you will see from 2005/2006 and indeed the previous years' accounts, the annual consolidated finances fluctuate from deficits to very, very modest surpluses over the years. Within Congress there are no reserves and there are very, very limited assets available to us.

Issues that have impacted significantly upon us over a number of years have been key items such as the unanticipated costs associated with the refurbishment of 31/32 Parnell Square, which as you know is the headquarters of Congress. There was interests and penalties charged by the Revenue Commissioners for investment income which was received during the 1980s but obviously had to be paid in recent years. There were the various costs incurred from legal action which Congress had to defend. There was project activity for which Congress undertook work but the funding was not subsequently realised. More recently there was the actuarial review of the staff superannuation schemes, which I referred to, and that resulted in a funding deficit of about 2 million euros or 1.4 million sterling.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Sorry Joe, there is a number of speakers here flagging to me that they are finding it difficult to hear the presentation because of conversations that are taking place that are clearly audible from up here, so I would just ask that people would cease the conversations to allow this important presentation to be made – Joe.

Joe O'Flynn, Treasurer of Congress

Thanks President. The financial problem in Congress peaked in 2002/2003 when the deficit on the main Congress account reached 334,000 euros or 234,000 sterling. And the deficit on the consolidated accounts of 200,000 euros or 140,000 sterling, against a background of the kind of income to Congress. That is a very significant deficit to have to contend with.

The organisation response was a significant organisational change and restructuring with the non-replacement of staff posts which became vacant.

There was the reallocation of some staff costs against some new income sources. There was a considerable increase in the level of contributions by Congress staff towards the superannuation schemes in both Dublin and Belfast. Congress suspended its affiliation to the ICFTU and there were various other cutbacks on non-essential costs right throughout that period.

Unfortunately, however, the cutbacks have an impact. For instance the Education and Training programme has been significantly diminished during a period when there was additional funding provision available for trade union lead training initiatives. We now have no senior executive post in the industrial relations area and in fact the General Secretary, David Begg, has had the key responsibility for this particular area over the last two years or so. Congress has an inability to develop or to run meaningful campaigns activity without recourse to unions for funds and that means that in every situation – like the labour standards and employment rights campaign – you first of all have to go back to the Executive, you have to go to the affiliates looking for funds to launch campaigns which basically should be launched immediately and would be launched quickly if Congress had the necessary wherewithal in terms of the funds available to it. There has been an increasing reliance on sourcing alternative funding for core activities and that has manifested itself primarily through projects and grant aid and as I said, 21 of the 37 staff being funded in that fashion. And, colleagues, I think it is fair to say that our international standing has been dented somewhat with some confederations because of our withdrawal from the ICFTU.

The GPC and the Executive Council from the end of last year decided that we should look at a sustainable solution to the financial problems faced by Congress and a small Finance & Planning Group was established to look at and examine how we might amend the situation. It very clearly became obvious that the current situation cannot be allowed to continue as it will and has already eroded the capacity of Congress to make an impact. The problem facing Congress cannot be corrected by any further cutbacks. We have reached the end of the line in terms of reorganisation or cutbacks within Congress itself. And there is a very strongly held view that Congress should and must be capable of funding the task which the movement expects it to carry out on its behalf. The conclusion, therefore, was that the only one source of dependable additional funding available to Congress for its mainstream activities was through the affiliated trade unions.

We as an Executive believed that the priorities for increased funding, before we actually go on to the funding proposal, are the appointment of an Assistant General Secretary in Head Office who will have the responsibility for industrial relations matters and that would immediately free up the General Secretary somewhat in terms of the whole policy development and other very important work which we believe has suffered somewhat by his responsibility for IR matters over the last year and a half of course. The cost of that, colleagues, including

overheads and all of the other associated costs, would be about 150,000 Euros per annum. We need to provide additional resources to provide additional ongoing activities to be tackled with a view to the restoration and improvement of services, particularly in the training and education development areas where we would be able to realise additional funding through the provision that is out there. The cost of that position we estimate to be about 50,000 euros per annum. The allocation of resources to fund Congress led campaigning, which would support organising and recruitment initiatives which the President so eloquently referred to this morning, has been at the heart of what the trade union movement has to be about going forward. The estimated cost there is about 180,000 euros per annum. The reaffiliation of Congress to the International Trade Union Confederation, which was formerly the ICFTU which I referred to, and the projected cost of that is about 70,000 euros per annum.

A contingency to put Congress in a position where it has a reserve to meet problems, particular problems as they arise, and what we are looking for there is a small, modest reserve of about 50,000 euros. This would require a minimum increase of about 500,000 euros per annum or 350,000 sterling. The implications for the affiliates are that the GPC and Finance & Planning Group developed a number of alternatives options which were based on increases in the affiliation fees to achieve the additional 500,000 euros. These were considered earlier in the year by the Executive Council at a number of meetings. This wasn't any speedy solution put forward at Congress Executive – it was very seriously and extensively considered by the Executive Council and it was followed up by, sorry, first of all there was a consensus at the Executive that the most workable proposal was a hybrid structure for future affiliation fees base on three factors: there was amount per member per union, an amount per BDC delegate plus a flat amount per union. This was endorsed by the Executive Council which asked the Secretariat to proceed with a consultation process with those unions who were not represented on the Executive Council of Congress itself, and following that consultation this particular motion was then developed taking into account the various views and suggestions which were put forward by all of the affiliates who engaged in the consultation process. The proposed structure is designed to produce a once off step increase to put Congress on a sound footing and it is recognised, colleagues, that these are insubstantial increases but we genuinely believe there is no other way to finance Congress other than by the unions affiliated to the organisation paying additional fees through this particular hybrid scheme. And I just want to say that this particular scheme does represent a very strong connection between membership and affiliation fees – the larger the union – the larger the affiliation fees. We also believe that every union derives a certain benefit, which is not always simply related to membership, and under the new system considered, the affiliation fee of every union will increase. While the percentage increases in affiliation fees in the case of the smaller unions is somewhat higher than the larger unions, the actual cash increase for the larger unions is much greater than the cash increases for the smaller union.

So, overall, we believe that; a) Motion 8 is necessary. It is vital and we believe its fair. It has been very well considered and thought out. We have had the process of consultation with all of the affiliates who were available to consult with us on it and I earnestly and strongly urge the delegates here this afternoon to support Motion 8.

President, I have pleasure in formally proposing Motion 8 to conference. Go raibh maith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Could I have the motion formally seconded please? Ok, Seamus, can I invite speakers.

Billy Lynn, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Delegates, Billy Lynn, NIPSA to speak on Motion No 8. Brothers and sisters, my union is very proud of our involvement with Congress. And we are very proud that we have supported many of the campaigns initiated by Congress. In particular over the last year the anti-water charges non-payment campaign which NIPSA has been very, very heavily involved in, including financially.

NIPSA has always been prepared to put its money where its mouth is to ensure the success of Congress campaigns. I think, like most unions in this room today, we are not particularly enamoured by the increase in the affiliation fees. Any increase in affiliation fees means that our own unions have less resources to spend on defending our own members. But we do recognise that there is a need for Congress to be properly funded and properly resourced. With the return of devolved administration in Northern Ireland there is no doubt that there will be an increased demand upon the Northern Ireland Committee of Congress and as unions who are organised in the North know full well, we are facing continual attacks on the public service. We have the review of public administration which could and will cost thousands of jobs. Similarly, we have the comprehensive spend review which will mean, and could mean, a reduction in the public service given to the public and the prospect again of thousands of jobs being lost. We believe that the Northern Ireland Committee of Congress must in itself be adequately funded and resourced in order to meet the needs of ordinary working people. The funding of NICICTU must be open and transparent and we need a commitment from Congress that it will ensure that there is proper funding and proper resources to enable NICICTU in the North combat these attacks upon us.

Thank you very much for listening to me.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much.

Sheila Nunan, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Sheila Nunan, Irish National Teachers Organisation. President, I just want to make a brief point in support of this motion. The case has been very adequately made by the proposer but I think we should be mindful in supporting it that we have to ensure that our constituent members understand the value for money principle underlying the motion here. I think all of us, in our unions, experience a form of disconnect between our members and our own Executives and there would be a further disconnect between members and ICTU, and I am speaking myself as General Treasurer of our own organisation. I will be charged next year with the task of explaining the increase when I am going to my own members looking for an increase on their own subscriptions and in case of the teaching unions here present with their Teaching Councils going to kick in next year, and there will be affiliation fees there, so it is really important I think that we heighten the visibility and clearly identify the actions that are going to arise from this particular increase. I think we should take encouragement from pages 47 to 50 of the Annual Report in relation to the research project and the very positive attitude. I found that very heartening and I must say I wouldn't have anticipated it but I do think that we need to make sure that our members fully appreciate and understand that because there is a lot of cynicism all the time in relation to just constantly going with the begging bowl looking for affiliation increases. So I think it will give ICTU the primacy it deserves and we certainly support that motion. Thank you.

Larry Broderick, Irish Bank Officials Association

Colleagues, delegates, IBOA the finance union supports this resolution and wholeheartedly endorse the points made by the previous speakers and indeed by the General Treasurer, Joe O'Flynn about the importance of having a properly funded Irish Congress of Trade Unions. We represent 21,000 members however in Ireland today. And for 75 years of our history, we have not been party to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. And it took a very bitter dispute with our employers, one of the most profitable employers in this country that led us to the realisation that to work outside the Irish Congress of Trade Unions was not the way forward. However, it is fair to say that from a trade union perspective in the private sector, there is a lot of concern as the earlier speaker had identified, in relation to the relation to the connection between the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and our members on the ground. The initial discussion and debate we had in relation to Standing Orders today reflected a very significant degree of people at this conference that wants to have a greater debate about the future direction of this trade union movement and, in particular, the balance between private sector and public sector employees. And I hope the incoming Executive

Committee takes note, very seriously, of the very strong view of the need for better debate, better consolidation, and an integrated approach to the challenges facing us North and South in this very country.

But in reality over the last 10 years, members in the private sector have witnessed significant change, particularly in our industry. We have looked at major rationalisations, job losses and outsourcing. We have also witnessed increased profitability with the four main banks in Ireland this year making 6 billion euros net profit. Senior executives awarding themselves pay increases not in line with the terms of the national wage agreement, and can I bring to this conference's attention one executive that awarded himself to the tune of 58% of a pay increase. And also senior management protecting their own pensions at the expense of our members. And from our members' perspective what are we facing? We are facing a national wage agreement that we have views about and mixed views as a movement which does not adequately reflect and indeed compensate for inflation. We signed off on an agreement that talked about significant measures to protect employment which are a major breakthrough but all of us are struggling to ensure that they are being adhered to on a daily basis on every workplace right throughout this country.

We are looking at an attack on pensions by some of the most profitable companies in this country in this point and time who are trying to take away defined pension benefit schemes which will have huge implications for our members and for everybody in the private sector. Where as a trade union we are prepared to support 100% the need for better funding but the message we give to conference today – the incoming Executive Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions needs to sit down and put in place a proper structure that can balance the needs of the private sector employees and the public sector employees and if that is not done colleagues, we will be back here in six years time and the only people that will be in this room will be the public sector and it will be a public sector “old boys” club. We ask you to support the resolution. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

If there are no other speakers can I call for a vote on Motion 8. All those in favour please show. Is there anyone against? Any abstentions? Few abstentions – that's ok. Noted the abstentions, so the motion is carried, thank you.

Can we move then to Motion 9 in the name of the Executive Council and call Dan Murphy to move please.

Dan Murphy, Public Services Executive Union

Mr Chairman, on behalf of the Executive Council I wish to move Motion 9. This, as you can see, relates to the organisation of the Biennial Delegate Conference. Now the purpose of the motion is to seek the endorsement of Conference for a comprehensive review of the way in which we run this conference.

There can be little doubt I think, Chair, but that the format of the conference that we use at the moment could best be described as tired. I suppose as the week goes on the delegates will get ever more tired, especially in the heat. But this situation with the conference is not something which has happened overnight rather it has been clear for some time. The purpose of the conference is to set policy and elect the leadership but there is also a need to ensure effective engagement of delegates and also a need to capture the imagination, or at the very least, the interest of the membership at large and Irish society generally. However, we have a format for the conference which has little relevance to most of the delegates let alone to the wider membership of the movement or Irish society as a whole. There have been efforts made in recent years to adapt the structure somewhat by having guest speakers and so on. But these tend to be set piece speeches with which the delegates do not really engage. We are seeking to expand on this further this year by having a new format for the health debate which will involve a Question and Answer session. It remains to be seen how effective that will be.

None of this however Chair addresses the issue of policy formulation. Here we have a situation where each union can submit two motions to the conference with the result that we get much the same delegates speaking on much the same motions every two years with the vast majority of hundreds of delegates simply acting as an audience. That is if they stay in the hall – I suppose the fact that the weather is so bad outside there is probably more people in the hall this year.

Now while efforts are made to group motions and similar subjects together and we have tried to composite motions this year, the overall result is the adoption of motions which are just a series of unrelated statements of opinion. Indeed, most of the motions Chair are carried unanimously – largely because there about motherhood and apple pie and nobody disagrees with them and they give little rise to little or no real debate other than set piece speeches. The result is that when we leave Bundoran at the end of this week, in the same way that we left Belfast two years ago, we will not leave with a coherent set of policies to act on for the next two years. Rather we will leave here at the end of the week and continue to make up policy on the hoof as we have always done.

There can be a tendency to criticise delegates for not engaging with the debates of the conference but frankly I think this is a gross injustice to the delegates. The delegates after all are not fools – the delegates are the leadership of their own unions and are serious players who are used to grappling with serious

problems. But they know that what is happening here cannot seriously be described as policy formulation and as a result they take very little interest. We need to take a radical look at the way in which we formulate policy. And if we do, I believe that the current process of having a random series of motions could not survive. We need to think ways which will involve the bulk of delegates in actual discussion and frankly this cannot be done in a forum consisting of hundreds of people – it simply cannot be done.

One possible alternative and I am not saying this is the only one, one possible alternative means of formulating policy could involve a series of commissions consisting of groups of delegates which would discuss various themes including any motions submitted by unions on those themes and the relevant sections of the Executive Council report, along with background papers prepared by the Secretariat and where appropriate outside speakers. The format of these commissions could be of a seminar type and involve smaller groups within the commissions examining particular aspects of the overall theme. The commission could then seek to pull all this together and the output could be a coherent policy platform on the particular theme which could come back to the full conference for debate. If we had a number of these commissions then we could arrange to sit with the delegates of the various unions to each of the commissions which would ensure that there was real engagement by the bulk of the delegates with the business of conference.

Real engagement could arise from the fact that the smaller groups could facilitate greater participation and the knowledge on the part of the delegates that there could be a real possibility that the result of the conference would be actual policies of a query sort which is not a possible outcome from our current structures.

The debate on the report of the commissions of the conference as a whole could facilitate substitutive concentration on real and coherent policies and would be bound to generate greater interest on the part of the delegates and be a matter of real interest for the wider membership and Irish society generally.

Now, I want to make it very clear Chair than in sketching out that possible approach as an alternative, I want to emphasise that I am not saying that the Executive Council has decided to adopt the approach I have described here. I simply wanted to paint one possible approach which would have the possibility of giving rise to real policy formulation and engagement on the part of the delegates. The Executive Council is open to considering any approach which may be suggested which would be more effective than our present structures. The basic problem which we have is that our current structures do not lead to real and coherent policy formulation and do not encourage or indeed permit of the bulk of the delegates in engaging with the conference. This is something which we have to confront and the Executive Council has submitted this motion to the conference to seek the support of the conference for a real root and

branch examination of the conference, and most importantly of all, to hear the views of the trade unions in this debate on any possible approaches to a better structure which can be taken on board by the working group mentioned in the motion. I move Motion 9 on behalf of the Executive Council.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Will you formally second, Mick? Can I have a formal seconder in case there is any ambiguity. Yes, we have a formal seconder. Mick.

Mick O'Reilly, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union

I may yet be able to second it. Mick O'Reilly, from the Amalgamated Transport. I have to say I agree with much of what Dan Murphy said. If we are serious about the policies that we have we need to think about how we debate them and above all I think not just what the policies are but what we are going to do if we are going to make interventions in the political structure, how we make those interventions in the political structure. An Ireland veteran once described the British House of Commons as a place where you could dramatise ideas and also a workshop. I think that's what this conference should be. It should be a place where there is debate, the clash of ideas, and also a workshop. Conclusions are drawn and we work out what we want to do about those policies. And the one thing I want clarification on in relation to this debate is that when the Executive Council conclude, because you see what you see the motion talks about is altering structures as such, and I believe when the Executive Council concludes the debate it should bring the totality of that back to a conference like this to decide how we go further. We shouldn't give the Executive Council a blank cheque – I am sure they are not asking for one – and I hope when I get the reassurance they will tell me they are not looking for one.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Any other speakers? No Dan, clarify.

Dan Murphy, Public Services Executive Union

Clarify the point raised by Mick, Chair. Obviously we are not looking for a blank cheque. If there were any changes in the constitution or Standing Orders or anything of that sort, it would have to be approved by Conference, whether a Special Conference or Biennial Conference. That's all Chair.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok. If there are no other speakers can I call for a vote on Motion 9 please. All those in favour. Against. Abstentions. Ok, it's carried.

Motion 10 – Constitutional Amendment in relation to Local Reserved Panel, Galway Trades Council.

Tom Browne, Galway Trades Council

Tom Browne, Galway Trades Council proposing Motion 10. In 1993 when the Review Group on the Local Trades Councils reported and recommended the reintroduction of the reserve seat on the Executive for Local Councils of Trade Unions, it was proposed that Trades Councils nominate for that position and also be they be solely elected by delegates of the Trades Councils at the ICTU Biennial Conference. However, in 1995 when the rule change was introduced that we have the present situation where the reserve seat is voted on by all the unions. Now the problem with that is that at the time of the review the idea was that the person elected to the reserve seat on the Executive for Trades Councils would become the driver of Trades Councils nationally and also in relation to the reorganisation and the revitalisation of Trades Councils at local level in relation to local economic and social development. Now over the last twelve years that hasn't really happened. Trades Councils at local level are involved in local economic groups, including Enterprise Boards, Strategic Policy Committees, Partnership Companies and also in the educational sector on the boards of the I.T.s for example. However, over the years they haven't received much support Congress and given the aging profile of activists in Trades Councils, there is quite a decline and if we continue the way we are going, within another ten years we will have trouble filling our posts on the Strategic Policy Committees, the Enterprise Board, the Partnership Companies etc. The current support for local Trades Councils is not working so we need a change. Changing the way of the election of the reserve seat for Trades Councils as was originally envisaged in 1973 would be one step in relation to this so I urge you to support the motion. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, Tom. Has that been formerly seconded? Please, thanks John, we have speakers.

Pat Keane, Technical Engineering Electrical Union

President, fellow delegates, Pat Keane, TEEU. As the proposer has said, the reason this motion is put forward is that the Trades Council delegates have been coming here first of all since 1982 to vote for the members of the Executive was taken off them. In 1991 the Review Group was set up under the Chair of the Vice President of Congress. The Review Group returned in 1993 with a report, which I have here, which was put in conjunction with motion 4 to the 1993 Biennial Conference. Now it was adopted as policy and part of the report was a recommendation that said that the Trades Council delegates for the reserve seat on the Executive and on the Northern Ireland Committee should only be elected

by Trades Council delegates. They are not allowed to vote on anything else. But that is not what is in place. How important are the Trades Councils? This is what we have got to ask ourselves. And I was very heartened this morning at the opening of Conference when on the screen and it is still coming up on the screen which is the famous Irish Ferries march. Congress facilitated one meeting, which lasted one hour, for Trades Council delegates and we had to spread out all over the country and organise one of the biggest marches we have had in recent years. And as the first speaker has also said, not only do the Trades Council delegates sit on various boards, you must remember these are the activists within branches, and then they are activists within the Trades Councils - for some of them Social Welfare Appeals Assessors. But we also operate as Boards of Management for the Resource Centres on behalf of Congress, and on various other committees with no resources, no funding, so what the proposal is saying is that the Trades Council delegates seek to have a position, a policy position which was adopted in 1993 put back in place to allow for that. Thank you.

Paddy Mackell, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Dia dhuit a chairde, President, brothers and sisters, Paddy Mackell on behalf of NIPSA to urge support for Motion No 10. Trades Councils throughout Ireland play a pivotal role in the trade union movement in bringing issues to a wider audience. This is often because they can be better placed to deal with issues which unions are supportive of but unfortunately do not have the resources to commit on the ground. In the Irish Ferries dispute, as we have heard of already, Trades Councils were to the fore, supported by Congress working tirelessly to mobilise and organise Irish workers to speak with one voice against the relentless onslaught of capital and big business in their attempt to abuse and erode the convictions of ordinary workers. Trades Councils and Irish workers were rejuvenated and shaken out of their slumber as they realise the power of ordinary workers when they unite.

In the North Trades Councils worked with others in the mass movement to challenge the imposition of water charges, led by Peter Bunting from Congress and John Corey from my own union, NIPSA, Trades Councils in Derry, Belfast, Fermanagh, Craigavon, Newry, Strabane, North Down & Ards and elsewhere ensured the message was delivered to working people and helped the vote of confidence of local communities to believe that standing united, that they could defeat water charges. Trades Council members brought that message to the whole community including Loyalists and Republican heartlands. They challenged the dominant parties in the North in public debate and forced them to confront water charges as the number one issue on the door front at the Assembly Elections. The ramifications are still being heard today in the review they are carrying out on water charges, and that was led by the Trades Council and others.

The work that Trades Councils do and carry out on areas such as economic development, the destruction of our health services, the growing poison of racism in our society and the attack on public services goes on long after working hours, late into the night and often at weekends. Time given freely on behalf of other workers, quite often using their own resources to do so.

In the North we have currently one delegate from the Trades Councils on the NICICTU Committee. That delegate is agreed by the whole group of Trades Councils and is located amongst them. In the last five years we have had a serving NICICTU member drawn from Strabane Trades Council, Craigavon Trades Council, and more recently from Belfast Trades Council. The Trades Council delegate is mandated by all of the Trades Councils in the North and is obliged to report back monthly on issues debated and decisions made. Conference – it works – it threatens no one. This proposal seeks to bring more structure on an Island wide basis to what already happens in practice in a Northern model. Put simply, one of the 36 on the Executive Council, would be filled by Trades Councils as currently happens but that position would be filled by and only required by the endorsement of Trades Councils across Ireland. It wouldn't be based on the strength of any individual union or unions but the collective endorsement of ordinary Trades Council members themselves endorsed by their own individual unions. It should not be seen as an alternative to or as an opposition to the Executive sovereignty or the Biennial Delegate Conference rather as being complimentary to the way in which organised labour reaches out to and organises and represents workers across Ireland. I urge your support. Go raibh maith agat.

Dooley Harte, Craigavon & District Trades Council

President, Conference, I never liked Paddy Mackell, but I hate him more even now because he basically said the vast majority of what I was going to say. The issue for us, my name's Dooley Harte from Craigavon & District Trades Council. The issue for us is about accountability. It is up to Trades Councils to decide individually who they nominate to represent them on the reserve seat on the Executive Council and the reserve seat on the Northern Ireland Committee. I certainly feel that it should be up to Trades Councils then to decide who represents them. The present minute, as Paddy said, there is a rotational agreement outside the door of Conference that's in place for the Northern Ireland Committee. That's not acceptable to me – it's something that is in place but it is certainly a system that we can improve on. Our Trades Council certainly feels that motion improves on it. It provides accountability and democracy through the Trades Council reserve seat. It is there for a reason – there is a particular constituency that needs to be represented on the Executive Council and on the Northern Ireland Committee and we would ask you to respect that constituency and to put that accountability back into the hands of those people that it needs to be with and actually support the motion. Thank you.

Dan Murphy, Public Services Executive Union

Dan Murphy, Public Services Executive Union, speaking on behalf of the Executive Council. The Executive Council, Chair, is opposed to Motion 10, which is, as you said, a motion to amend the system of election. The purpose of the motion is amend the constitution so that the election of the member of Executive Council reserved for persons nominated by Trade Councils, the electorate should only be those delegates who are themselves nominated by Trades Councils.

Now a lot of the discussions that has taken place on this motion so far, Chair, has been about the role of Trades Councils, which I submit is absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the issue under discussion which is about who the electorate in a particular election should be.

The role of Trades Councils is a very important one in that they provide a means for affiliated trade unions to act together at local level and the significance of their role is emphasised in Motion 11 following this motion which is fully supported by the Executive Council. In looking at the proposal in the motion, however, it is necessary to bare in mind the history of the involvement of Trades Councils, delegates, in elections at the national conference. For many years after the founding of the reunited Congress in the end of the fifties, delegates of Trades Councils were entitled to vote in all elections at the national conference. Where the delegates of some Trades Councils abstained in the elections as a matter of principal. There was always a tendency for some of these delegates to vote in accordance with the wishes of the unions of which they were members and isn't that very surprising. However, as time went on what actually happened was that some unions went around the country arranging to have their members appointed as delegates of Trades Councils on the basis that they would look after their expenses and these delegates became, for all practical purposes, members of the delegations of their unions and voted in accordance with the wishes of their trade unions. It had nothing to do with the Trades Councils that they were allegedly representing. There was a significant increase indeed, Chair, interestingly enough, in the number of delegates attending Conference from Trades Councils for the very reason I have just mentioned, and indeed in the number of Trades Councils attending. There were even suggestions that some of these Councils were no more than paper bodies whose sole reason for existing was to appoint delegates of particular unions to attend the national conference of Congress for the purpose of delivering votes to their trade unions in the elections. None of this makes very pleasant reading and mercifully we are in private session but it is the truth and actually what happened. Eventually this was identified for what it was – a clear outrageous abuse with the result that the constitution was amended so that delegates of Trades Councils were no longer entitled to vote in elections. There was a considerable amount of unhappiness, obviously, on the part of Trades Councils about this and Congress eventually took steps to respond to it by making provision for a seat on the Executive Council to be reserved for nominees of Trades Councils. There were

some reservations about this move at the time on the grounds that there was no need for such provision since Trades Councils, of their nature, were local bodies and not national in character. As a result in making that change, however, there was a compromise made whereby the nominations would be made by Trades Councils but Congress retained the arrangement that voting in all elections, including the member for the reserve seat, would continue to be confined to delegates of trade unions because of the experience to which I have referred. If the constitution were to be amended in the manner suggested in the motion, frankly Chair, and it doesn't give me any pleasure to say this, but it takes very little imagination to see how abuses of the sort which arose before would happen again. And frankly, delegates, with the problems that we have confronting us in this trade union movement we could well do without that.

In any event there would be no logic in having a situation where voting in the election for the reserve seat for Trades Councils would be confined to the delegates of Trades Councils. We might as well suggest that the election of the women members of the Executive Council would be confined to women delegates.

In the last analysis, Congress is a federation of trade unions who retain their independence. But having retained their independence come together to pool some of their sovereignty to act together in their collective interests. And, of course, finance the organisation as well as financing the Trades Councils. Given that trade unions must be able to decide who the members of the controlling body will be, and it would be wholly inconsistent with that to devolve the election of any member of the Executive to bodies other than affiliated trade unions. Trades Councils are bodies composed of trade unions – they are not independent bodies. They have an important role to play in the movement at the local level in implementing Congress policy. As I have explained the history of the involvement of Trades Councils delegates in elections has been a somewhat fraught one and the current situation, while it may not be perfect in every respect, is I think a very reasonable compromise which the Executive Council believes should not be upset now by the adoption of this motion.

Accordingly, Chair, the Executive Council urges Conference to reject Motion 10 and to support Motion 11. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Are there any further speakers on Motion 10? Tom, do you want to exercise a right of reply?

Tom Browne, Galway Trades Council

It is ironic that the previous speaker spent time on Motion 9 telling us how we need to reform ourselves and spend his reply on Motion 10 telling us how we should stay the same.

His criticism in relation to the larger unions going around organising themselves at local Trade Council level in order to influence an outcome at Conference is extraordinary considering that the larger unions already can have a much easier job now in influencing in who is elected to the reserve seat here. And, in fact, maybe we should get rid of the pretence altogether and just say it is not a reserve seat for Trades Councils but a reserve seat, or an extra seat, for the larger trade unions. I think all the arguments have been rehearsed and I just ask you to support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you very much Tom. Can I now call the vote on Motion 10. All those in favour please show. All those against. The motion is lost.

Can I now call on Craigavon Trades & District Trades Council to move Motion 11.

OK before we start can we settle down again please. Sorry, if you are going to leave the hall can you do so quietly in order that we can proceed with the discussion because I am being asked to facilitate the restoration of stuff that was dropped this morning later on in this session, so we want to keep Conference flowing as smoothly as possible. Ok.

Dooley Harte, Craigavon & District Trades Council

President, Conference, Dooley Harte on behalf of Craigavon & District Trades Council to move Motion 11. First of all Conference I think that we would, or I would certainly like to refer to Hugh McConville's comments this morning – the speaker from Sligo Trades Council – in relation to the need to address the issue of membership of Trades Councils, the work of Trades Councils and the fact that if we don't address the issue of Trades Councils, that there will be a diminished service, not only to our communities but also to our unions. Conference, this motion is quite simply a call from our Trades Council to affiliates and to Congress to begin to support, and to continue to support the work of Trades Councils. In 2005, the Northern Ireland Trades Councils produced a three year programme of work to help focus activity across the North. This programme looked at issues such as water charges, migrant rights, public services, Trades Council organisation. The programme set out challenges for the movement and I consider while not fulfilled in totality, the programme has been successful in many areas. I have to say that if you referred to your annual report there is a

reference to the work, and quite rightly, in relation to the work on opposition to water charges in the North. I have to say that there was a proposal from Trades Councils presented to the Northern Ireland Committee to set up the campaign group that brought that work forward. And certainly we would like to see, I have to say from our Trades Council, that campaign group resurrected and brought forward, because we don't believe that water charges is off the agenda. There is the fact that Trades Councils have actively supported that campaign. There have been meetings, certainly from our Trades Councils and others, with local political representatives. There has been community meetings, there has been rallies organised by different Trades Councils in support of the Congress position on that. We have also successfully resurrected Trades Councils in Newry and Ballymena and our own Trades Council was only reconstituted and reactivated about five years ago. Work is ongoing in many areas and we will continue to do that work as a movement across the North and we will continue to grow. As part of our efforts, Trades Councils across the Island have again begun to come together and discuss common issues as has been indicated in the previous motion with regard to the issue and the various protests. As indicated on page 64 of the Executive Council report, Trades Councils have met and begun a process of moving matters forward of common interest. Solidarity in matters has been of benefit of affiliates of Congress, however, as the motion sets out we do need support as part of that process. While some affiliates might get tired of hearing this from Trades Councils, we will continue to shout about the need for support. We need affiliation fees because without finance we can't move issues forward, but even more importantly, we need members of affiliates to come forward, put their names forward and become activists in Trades Councils. We need affiliates to actively promote Trades Councils, to use Trades Councils to gain local support for local and regional issues. Our Council has supported strikes on education cuts, strikes on public services, the campaign on the health service and more recently the issues around the postal strikes. We have attended picket lines to show solidarity and have placed articles in the local press urging support for these campaigns.

We would not only ask affiliates to support this motion today by raising your hands in support but also by revealing what Trades Councils you as organisations affiliated to, how many members you have actively on Trades Councils and also reviewing how the work of Trades Councils can be promoted with regards to your communities, your constituencies and also with regards to your organisations.

In conclusion, I would have to indicate that there is an exhibition on tomorrow afternoon, as organised by the Belfast & Craigavon Trades Councils, on the Spanish Civil War, in support of the work on the International Brigades Commemoration Committee which is something we have been heavily involved in and I would certainly ask for your support for that. I would also ask your support for this motion. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much, Dooley. Is there a formal seconder? Yes, John, thanks. Any other speakers? If not can I move the vote on Motion 11. All those in favour. Against. Any abstentions? Ok, that's carried.

Can I ask at this stage for the formal adoption of the relevant sections of the Executive Council report – that's the section dealing with Future Funding and Organisation, Congress Education Training & Skills Development, Congress Activities and the Appendix 1 dealing with Congress Accounts. Are those agreed? Agreed, thank you.

Also to alert you to the information contained in the following sections of the Biennial Report – the Appendix dealing with the Affiliated Membership – Appendix 2, Affiliated Membership at Appendix 3, Congress Secretariat Committees & External Bodies and Actions on Motions to the BDC 2005. All those agreed? There are no issues arising. Ok, thanks very much.

We are going to move on now and deal with the Recruitment and Organisation section – that is Section 2, Chapter 2, page 43 and 51 dealing with Recruitment and Organisation, and we are going to have a powerpoint presentation by Sally Anne on this issue. Sorry, what I was asking there was there someone going to speak.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders

Chair, Michael Sharp, Chair of Standing Orders with a verbal Standing Orders Report No 3.

Delegates will have noticed, as will you President, we lost some business this morning and specifically that included two scheduled addresses by guest speakers. Now for practical reasons it is necessary that those contributions be taken today. We also have another guest speaker scheduled for later this evening, so the Standing Orders Committee is proposing, President, that at 5 O'Clock you start to take those guest speakers so as to ensure that the three of them are taken today. We would put that to you.

We also have to report that we have got a few Emergency Motions which we will report on tomorrow morning. We are also, people will be conscious of the time because we lost some motions this morning, we have to look at how they can be rescheduled. We don't propose any time constraints at the moment but we would ask people coming to the rostrum to exercise a certain degree of self-discipline in terms of time or we will have problems.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, thanks for that Michael. So what it proposes is that in addition to Elaine Harvey speaking at the end of this session that we would also take a contribution from Rhonda Dohaghy and Berni McCrea. Is that agreed? Ok.

Can I now move to the presentation.

Sally Anne Kinahan, Assistant General Secretary

Thank you President, colleagues. I am going to go through with you an overview presentation just at where we are at in terms of membership and to also bring you through an overview of collaborative initiative that is now underway and which we wish to formally get your support from here today for the movement.

I suppose, colleagues, the first issue is the good news part and that is that membership is going up and as our Treasurer, Joe O'Flynn announced earlier on, we have seen year on year increases since the last BDC of about 31,000 members per annum, so since we last met in Belfast there are 62,000 more members affiliated to Congress and that, colleagues, is a tremendous achievement. Congress total membership in Ireland, North and South, increased to 832,000 members this year. Our membership in Northern Ireland reached 229,000 and in the Republic 603,000. However, workforce growth in the Republic, where it is now at just over 2 million, of which 1.7 million are employees and if you take that workforce number – the 1.7 and if you look at the number of trade union members down here, 603,000 in Congress affiliated unions and a further 25,000 or so outside of Congress, we are looking at 628,000 and a union density level in the Republic of 36%.

In Northern Ireland with a workforce, when you strip out the self-employed, of 615,000, gives us a density rate of about 37%.

I suppose the dilemma we face is that two years ago our density was at 38% so that the last time we met as a confederation in Belfast, we had a density level of 38% and we were worried about it. Just over a decade ago that density was at 52%. In order just to just get us back to the 38% level, we need to have an additional 33,500 members join us now. So what we have is a very significant challenge, colleagues, where there is a growing gap developing between the number of people who are actually at work and the number of people who are in the trade union movement and you can see by this chart, which isn't meant to be a scary chart but I certainly hope that it is for all of you sitting in the hall today, you can see a gap that is emerging and what I am not showing you now is where that balloon is of union members, because that balloon is among middle aged and older members and where we are most challenged is at the younger end of the scale. And so what we don't have coming up behind us is a new crèche

intake of young trade union members to carry on the tradition to be active in their unions and to build union strength. We have facing us an alarming scenario.

If you look at us in a European context, you will see from this chart that we are not doing so bad compared to many other countries across the European 15. In fact only Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Sweden are ahead of us there. But in a European context density has declined from 33% since 1990 to 26% and in the US in the same period from 15.5% to 12.4%. Looking at the Republic of Ireland workforce again because I am going to be talking about the collaborative initiative with you in a moment just in the Republic, the workforce growth during 2006 was over 74,000 employees. Our net increase in membership was almost 17,000, representing 22% of those additional jobs. So, even though union membership is rising it is not keeping pace with the workforce growth leading to declining density. And of course this is not the only reason why our density is dis-improving or why we are finding it very challenging to take on new members. There is a whole shift towards the services sector where traditionally we have not been strong. The proliferation of small to medium enterprises – we understand that there are about 800,000 workers in the Republic who are employed in enterprises with 50 or less workers. The growth of part-time and temporary work which has been a feature of our economic progress. The increasing hostility that we experience from employers but it is also about our own capacity, colleagues, because the capacity of our union organisations to address this challenge and the impact is that we now have about 358,000 members in the private sector out of a private sector workforce of almost 1.4 million workers. And we are talking about a density level of 26%.

So looking at the private sector we are talking about over a million members now in our workforce who are not in unions. Now, some of those members are actually covered by existing union arrangements in unionised workplaces. We don't know what the exact numbers are but in our discussions across unions we estimate that about 60% of workers currently in the private sector in unionised workplaces are in membership. So that presents for us about a quarter of a million members who are prospective members for us through improved organising activity. But that still leaves almost 800,000 in non-union workplaces.

I think that that certainly the time is right within the movement in terms of our realisation that we have to act now. I think that we have begun certainly to recognise the challenge and I think we are also acknowledging some of the constraints that we face and that fact that our resources are extremely limited. Prioritisation was given in the Congress Strategic Plan, which was agreed by the Executive Council, and by our President, Peter McLoone at the last BDC, to redouble our efforts to find a way to bring unions together to tackle the challenge. This led to a number of unions coming together with Congress to explore ways of working together to promote and extend union organisation. I want to talk just for a few moments about the positioning. Now this is actually covered off in the BDC Report under the Research section.

The time could not be better for us in many ways even though there are huge challenges facing us. In the research that was undertaken for the LIFT Project over the last year and a half, a massive endorsement was given to the trade union movement from workers Ireland wide. 60% of workers in the Republic and 64% in Northern Ireland believe that unions play an important or very important role. Now we are talking about all workers there – not just those who are members of trade unions. Trade unions are perceived by both members and non-members to have an important role to play, especially in terms of protecting the rights of all workers and when negotiating with Government and employers. I think if you look at the research – and I would urge you to read it – you will also see that the issues that workers are concerned about are actually the issues that we probably at best at dealing with. Issues around pay and security in the workplace.

I want to draw your attention also to another piece of research that wasn't commissioned by Congress or by the LIFT organisation. It was actually commissioned by Primetime from Amarach and it was to look at how trust in institutions had changed over the last couple of decades and if you look at the chart here you will see the top line – the dark blue represents the standing 25 years ago and the bottom line – the light blue bar – represents the standing 25 years on – last year. And you can see from that chart that the trade union movement is the only institution where trust has actually increased. So overall we have seen confidence decrease in institutions, especially in terms of the Gardai, the legal system and the church and it is only in trade unions that confidence has actually increased over the last 25 years.

I also want to draw your attention to the John Geary research that was carried out with the ESRI and UCD and it is looking at the whole potential for union membership and it suggests that many non-union workers would join unions if the employer was willing to support union organisation. The research estimates that this could translate into a density level of 71% - it would actually give us over 1.1 million members if that was the case. But that is based on having a benign attitude towards unions – in fact having a welcoming approach from management towards the establishment of union organisations and we all know that is most unlikely. However, what was quite interesting and surprising in fact is that in the absence of such an attitude from management and of course from the consorted effort to recruit, that union density could rise to up to 52% which would bring us up to about 900,000 members.

Colleagues, the reason why I am presenting this to you is because opposition is very strong at the moment and that has been evidenced by all of the research that I have highlighted. And, no favours are really done for us out there by the media in terms of trying to promote the cause on behalf of the trade union movement. We are the only ones ourselves that can actually do that. But I think all of that indicates that this is a moment in time for unions to act. As I said at the

outset this is really about telling of you about a collaborative initiative and in fact four unions initially sat around the table with Congress and negotiated and worked our way through developing a proposition and what more recently we were joined by one more union. And those five unions together represent 62% of the membership in the Republic of Ireland and it is predominantly private sector membership. The unions have agreed to pool their resources, experience and knowledge to extend union organisation. And what we have done is sat down – and I can tell you it took many, many months to get to a point where we had a consensus around the type of proposition and principles that we could work together on. But what we have done is develop a proposal and we have designated it as a Union Outreach Service. It is envisaged that this service will comprise information and advisory supports in the form of online and personal responses but it is also understood that this service, which I don't think will ever be called UOS and that we go out there and start promoting it, cannot offer negotiation facilities. This can only be done by unions. But migration of members to full union membership is the key objective of everything that we will do. All communication activities will be used to inform, build awareness, engage in campaigns and build the influence of the trade union movement and that is all communications that we involve to recruit people and inform people about this initiative and then all communications that we continue to have with individuals who join. The services will be tailored to meet the needs of key target groups including young workers, women and migrant workers and this will necessitate providing multi-lingual services and resources. And a key part of the strategy will be the development and delivery of an awareness raising and advisory programme that senior cycle secondary and third level students to increase their understanding of unions, engage them in campaigning and provide them with a gateway to union membership.

So very briefly, colleague, what we are looking at is establishing a mass communications programme using every means available to us in terms of TV ads, radio ads, and television, print – you name it we are going to do it. We are looking at how we might develop campaigns that are regional, national and sectorally targeted. We are looking at how workers can contact this service and be facilitated to get information and advice and to be supported with the difficulties they face. But clearly this is not something that is as simple as I am making it sound at the moment. There is a huge amount of work to be done to make this a success and one of the things we have to do is get a proper analysis of all unionised workplaces in the country so that when we are contacted by people to avail of this service that we can direct them, as appropriate, to the union that they should be joining and if there is no union in the area that they are operating in then clearly they can avail of the service. So there is a huge amount of work to be done.

Likewise in developing the service provision that we have to put in place, work is currently underway to pull together the most detailed database and information bank around anything to do with employment and the workplace and peoples'

rights, so that we are in a position to give people advice directly and also for them self-select and search for information. Clearly this is not a charitable service, this is a service that we will have to charge for because what we need to ensure that it is viable and sustainable going forward. But what we are very clear about, colleagues, is that this service will have limitations. This is not about establishing collective agreements and negotiating with people on their behalf in the workplace, this can only be done by unions and what we are trying to do is to use this process and this approach to develop the people who join it, to expose them to trade union organisation and, as I said already, to migrate them to full union organisations.

The principle of this initiative, and this was the most difficult part for us to negotiate because we had to be able to share those principles as everybody feels it fits with what they are trying to do within each of their own union organisation, the principles are that this initiative will become breath led. It will compliment efforts to rebuild union density and extend union organisation. And the object of the initiative is to create a service to extend to workers in non-union workplaces and low density sectors providing, as I have already said, information advisory services but not negotiating services. It is recognised that what we are doing is predominantly for individuals rather than for groups of workers and it should also be capable of providing for general and sectoral recruitment campaigns so that if necessary we can switch it into, for example, the telecommunications sector, into retailers if necessary or whatever. All activity will have the purpose of building general awareness of the role of unions and about the campaigns in which we are involved. It will promote the premium of union membership and support the priority of the stakeholder unions to organise workers.

If necessary, it will be capable of providing servicing reports for individual unions if they wish to avail of it and I suppose it is important that people transfer into full union membership and this initiative will also have a legal personality and form with Articles of Association covering the relationships and clear rules about how the entity will function. And were we are at now, colleagues, is that we have developed the proposal. We have put temporary project management into place. We are developing the four key components of it – the service model, the ICT and database system which in fact has already been designed – this has taken us about seven months to develop, the communications model and a proposal for the governance of the structure. We are aiming to run a test on this initiative later in the year. We are hoping to be able to kick that off by the end of this year and we have been talking about running it in the south to the south east but what we are actually going to do is to carry out further research. We are going to actually talk to the types of workers that we are trying to target to deliver the service to. We have a huge piece of work to do in conducting further work with the unions and when we evaluate the test we will then be ready to roll this out nationally. In all the discussions we have had about making this happen, about bringing it to fruition, it hasn't been about increasing membership for the sake of

increasing the numbers. It has always been about increasing union strength. Strength, colleagues, to achieve good standards of employment, good conditions and decent pay. Strength to shape the economy and our society so that it delivers for everyone. And most importantly, strength to create a fair, equal and decent society for all.

And in finishing, colleagues, I would just like to say to you that this initiative is being shaped. We are getting ready to put it out there but the door isn't closed and new entrants would be extremely welcome.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

I don't think we have any. Ok.

Steve Fitzpatrick, Communication Workers' Union

Steve Fitzpatrick, Communication Workers' Union. Thank you President. I must say that I am a little bit disappointed that there hasn't been a rush to the microphone on this issue. I think that the presentation that Sally Anne has given us is one of the most exciting presentation I have heard at an ICTU conference. You know, the first thing and the first reason for being in a union is to organise and it is the one thing that we haven't managed to do in the correct manner over the years. I am going to hear many speeches this week about the trade union movement when the reality is that if you look at union density the only movement that is happening is a backwards movement. We are losing the battle to keep density up in the trade union movement and that's our fault – no body else – there is nobody else to blame. We have got five unions out of approximately 50 unions who are involved in trying to develop this Outreach service. It just isn't good enough. We come here conference after conference passing motions, demanding action from the Executive Council that they get out there and organise workers and when we actually put something together we get five unions out of 50 unions willing to put their hands in their pockets, where it hurts, and get up and do something about it.

Now I totally accept that every trade union makes its own efforts to organise in its own sectors but the way life is organised is changing. The way people work is changing. The way you can reach people is changing and we have got to take account of all of those things.

I appeal to every union here. We have unions that are sector specific, whether it is teachers or nurses or whatever it might be, who probably feel that they don't have any need to get involved in this type of a process. But let's face it – all of those things will change as well. We are going have different ways of delivering health, different ways of delivering education. Those traditional things will change and you will need to reach those new types of people in your industries as well.

I am coming up here to appeal to the activists in the union, to the Executives, to the delegates here to go back to your own union, have this debate and ask yourselves why you are not involved in this, how you can become involved in it and I genuinely would appeal to each and everyone of you to join with us in doing the most important thing we can do in the trade union movement, which is to organise and recruit. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Are there any other speakers?

Susie Hall, Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

Susie Hall, ASTI. I hadn't intended to speak, Mr Chairman, but it strikes me that there is an elephant in the room and that everybody has very skilfully skirted around it. The most obvious reason why workers no longer feel that there is any point in joining a trade union is because of national wage agreements and social partnership. Because the sort of battles that used to be there to be fought are no longer there and so whether you join a union or whether you don't it really makes very little difference in the grand scale of things as they would see it. Now those of us who are activists within our own unions, we know very well, you know, that there is an awful lot more than that but that is the perception and it is out there and unless we talk about that, and I didn't see it mentioned once as one of the reasons why people are not joining trade unions in Sally Anne's presentation, which otherwise I must say I thought was superb. But if we are not mentioning that it seems to me that that is one of the main reasons. I would never have become involved actively in a trade union. I would have been a very typical teacher, you pay your sub, you never bother to go to meetings and you don't get involved. And getting sacked from my first job focussed my attention and I was sacked for no other reason that I said that I was getting married and that was it – shown the door and you do that then and you can't do it now. That was a reason to get stuck in and get involved but over the years trade unions have been, if you like the victims of their own success. They have ensured that those kinds of things can't happen anymore. They have participated in the debate on equality and marginalisation of minorities and things like that and so they have been highly successful in ensuring that people have better qualities of work and better tenure in employment than I had when I started out – a hundred years ago! So that is part of the reason but I do feel that social partnership now has made a lot of people feel that they actually don't have a voice and that nothing that they could do or say will have a real influence and they therefore don't see the point. And, I think I absolutely applaud Sally Anne's suggestions as to how Outreach can be carried out and achieved but unless you make it relevant to people, unless you make them see that every individual voice matters then I think you have lost the debate. I mean the teaching unions are fairly successful – we have very, very high percentages of trade union membership compared to any of Sally

Anne's figures, we would be sky high by comparison and certainly compared to our fellow teacher unions across Europe and Britain, but the fact of the matter is that people need to see that their voice and their participation in the trade union movement can actually bring something about and will change things for them. And unless you get that message through I think it could be in vain. Social partnership and national wage agreements have actually done it for trade union membership in my view.

Thank you very much.

Peter Nolan, Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union

Peter Nolan, IMPACT again commending the report from Sally Anne. Implicit in the report in relation to figures of density, showing the private sector rates of density and not necessarily showing the public sector rates of density, reveals that there is a significant degree of disparity in relation to that level of density and it is not one that is of benefit to the movement in any way. But there is no divine law that says that those respective levels of density, either the higher one in the public sector, should remain where it is or the lower one in the private sector should remain where it is. It is product of our capacity to transform and ensure that this continued strength and growth in the trade union movement throughout both sectors, and it is for that reason that we are pleased that our central Executive Committee has taken the decision to contribute to a fund which will largely be of benefit in the private sector, and that is something which took some explanation within our own membership, but we are entirely committed to that prospect.

I want to use the occasion this afternoon as well to draw attention to a development which carried at the weekend, the 85th year of the commencement of the Association of Officers of Taxes concluded with a deal relating to their integration and movement to our sister unions in the CPSU and PSEU, and as part of their continuing legacy to the trade union movement they have this weekend donated €100,000 to the campaign to bring trade unionism back to the school system to ensure there is an opportunity that young people would continue to have the avenue to join a union, will have the opportunity to secure and ensure that our responsibility to turn that goodwill that has been shown in the figures in the Executive Report, to turn the goodwill or Irish people towards this movement into practical membership for the union.

The resource developed by Congress is one practical step. I would like to thank the Tax Official's Branch for that contribution.

Edward Matthews, Irish Nurses Organisation

Mr President, Executive and colleagues, Edward Matthews, Irish Nurses Organisation and clearly on this occasion Chairperson of the Congress Youth Committee as well. I have to commend the report from Sally Anne, particularly in the context of its emphasis on young people and it's not the first time that I have heard young people mentioned in a very positive vein today. Now I am happy to report Sally Anne that there is one or two of us left. We will keep going for another while but the particular emphasis which is placed on young people within the strategy that is proposed is absolutely essential and particularly, the focussing on the educational system, the campaigning and the media. The dynamic by which young people will become involved in organisation has changed. You can have a lengthy debate as to what relevance trade unions have or otherwise in our society. I believe, of course, that we are a core sector of society and we have huge value for how we communicate that value to people and how we communicate our relevance within non-standardised union sectors and within sectors where we have not traditionally been strong.

I have to disagree the previous colleague when she said that social partnership was the problem. I think we are the problem more so than social partnership. We have, and it would appear that we have acknowledged or at least have stepped forward to the term "me culpa" to say we are not keeping place. But all is not bad. We are standing here saying that a problem exists and we need to solve that problem. I commend you in your activities and in your future plans. I wish you well in the initial testing and again I really must say how heart-warming it is for a youth activist, Chair of the Youth Committee, to hear a senior member of Congress place such emphasis on young people in this movement. I urge you Conference to support the initiative. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

This is a youthful Seamus Dooley.

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists respectively suggesting to the representative of the ASTI that she might have done her homework before she addressed Conference and in doing so, I can recommend as a reading test yesterday's fine publication by IMPACT written by three members of my union, which puts the reality of social partnership in context.

We really have to get real. Let's forget about living in the past, let's forget about talking as Susie Hall did about the battles of the past. We won battles, we lost battles but we were never there for the battle. We were there for the achievement. We took part in battles to decided what we could deliver for our members. The National Union of Journalists, for many years, opposed social

partnership. Then we changed our minds. The commitment to social partnership is not an ideological position. The opposition to social partnership was never an ideological position. Unashamedly, what the trade union movement does – it adapts to a changing situation and you use what every influence you have in the manner that is most effective for our members. We stand outside Government Buildings and we can stick our tongues out at the employers as they go in but that will not deliver and is not capable of delivering the type of influence on social, economic, cultural, heritage and a wide range of policies. We haven't won everything through social partnership but the Gospel of despair which I have heard preached from this podium time after time after time is in itself a disincentive. Who would want to join a union whose lament is 'we will all be out in ruins since Hanrahan before the next social partnership talks are out'. Why would you want to join a union like that.

Let us recognise that there are challenges, that there are very real challenges and that social partnership is not the answer. But walking off the pitch and allowing those with power, influence and money to remain on the pitch on their own – is that the answer? Clearly it is not.

In relation to the issue of organisation my own union, as what I would call a niche union, has decided not to take part in the initiative. That does not mean that we are not enthusiastic about it, it simply means we do not believe that it is appropriate to our needs at the moment. But we recognise that there is a need for a better commitment to the organisation and we appointed an Assistant Organiser over two years ago. Nichola Coleman, our Assistant Organiser with the assistance of Des Fagan, the organiser, has been spent a great deal of time on the issue of organisation. I don't believe it is a coincidence that the NUJ has increased membership, North and South of the border within the last twelve months. We are not ruined, we are growing, we are thriving – I'm sure it has got nothing to do with the fact that we backed social partnership. It is because we committed ourselves to an organising model and we must do that.

Finally, could I say that even for unions who do not take part in this, there must be a mechanism for more intelligent use of limited resources. More and more small unions are spending more and more money, for instance on legal services, on administrative services, on servicing of personal caseload. What is needed is imagination, what is needed is a recognition that we have much to offer. If we don't offer what we have to offer no one else will.

Colleagues, I commend Sally Anne and all of the staff at Congress for this and I also actually want to pay tribute to Susie Hall because without her provocative comments we probably wouldn't have had a debate.

Jack O'Connor, Services, Industrial Professional Trade Union

President, colleagues, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU. I didn't intend to speak either – I was provoked by Susie Hall's contribution and I have to say that for someone who didn't intend to speak, she spoke very well indeed and presented us with something of a challenge to respond to. But the debate about social partnership is a debate for another day and I don't want to criticise Susie Hall for something she didn't say. She didn't actually say that social partnership was the cause of all the problems that we have but there are many in our movement who believe that if it would go away that our problems would be solved. And the fact of the matter, delegates, is that nothing could be further from the truth.

Somebody asked me during the course of the debate about social partnership here a while ago, as to why it was that we have managed to come to the end of a period of twenty years, much applauded for our participation in social partnership in the Republic but have managed nonetheless not to have achieved any legislation providing for trade union recognition, or any statutory protection for Shop Stewards. And the person who asked me was, you can imagine, not a supporter of social partnership. But I had to answer in this way. It is not the question that preoccupies me, I said. The question that preoccupies me is how we manage to come through twenty years without ever breaking down on negotiation on either of those two issues. And that reflects, delegates I think, the degree if we were honest, of the priority we have put forward, the key issue facing us as organisation that are trusted with responsibility for the interests of working people and their families on this island.

I have to say to Susie and to others that it is entirely illogical to argue that we should walk away from an arena, from a mechanism by which for once or twice we can unite all workers pursuing one agenda. But it is equally illogical that we should fail to see the value of it as the mechanism by means of which we can assert the rights and interests of working people and the most fundamental rights in a democratic society is the right to organise. But the employers and the Government will not help us organise and will not organise for us. We, delegates, we have to do that and the reality is let's face it – that we have not been applying ourselves to that task intelligently or properly or in a way that recognised the extent of the challenge with which we are faced.

We spend more than 95% of our resources, all of individually and collectively, representing the interest of a diminishing 35%. That means there is less than 5% for the other 65% who are being exploited in many cases, to undermine what many of us and what our movement spent the last thirty years or more trying to establish by way of reasonable standards of employment and reasonable quality of our environment in our society. We, in SIPTU, have many reservations about this particular project. But nonetheless we compliment Sally Anne Kinahan for her initiative and intelligence and the innovative way which she has brought it to us. But despite our reservations we are going with it for two reasons: one is

because it's the first time that I can recall that an initiative embracing the potential of the entire movement was launched and the other reason is we are supporting it, delegates, because somebody is doing something and it is worth doing something given the stage we are at and given the need to act before it's too late. Thank you delegates.

Brendan O'Sullivan, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Delegate, Brendan O'Sullivan, INTO and like most of the other speakers here I hadn't intended to get up to speak at all and I am only going to say one thing and it is this. I did not understand Susie Hall to say that partnership or central bargaining has been the cause of all our ills for the last ten, fifteen years. I understood her to say, and I believe this, that there is a feeling, a perception among ordinary members that centralised bargaining has led to a position where they no longer have an influence on the kind of decisions that are being made within the trade union movement. That is what I understood Susie Hall to say and I think that's a valid point. And, I would say one other thing – that is borne out by the fact that we could not at this Biennial Conference get discussion of modernisation which our members have undergone at our ICTU conference. We couldn't discuss that this morning. So I understand why they demarginalised.

Larry Broderick, Irish Bank Officials Association

Thank you very much President. Again I think first of all on behalf of IBOA, the Finance Union, we commend the report given by Sally Anne, but do take some exception to some suggestions that because we are not part of the five unions we don't support organising, we don't believe in its value to the organisation and I think it's important that we put this in context. At the start of this Conference we had a debate in relation to what is the future direction of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions as a united group to meet those challenges head on? There are challenges in the public sector; there are challenges in the private sector and I think the theme for the incoming Executive Committee is the need to have this discussion and to have this debate. And it is a debate about social partnership because there are very few trade unions that will argue against social partnership now. The debate before Conference is what is the model of social partnership that we want for the future, and those of us who have rejected social partnership have not rejected the concept. We do not want to be on the outside looking in. We want to be part of a structure that delivers for all members in a fair and reasonable fashion. And it is a fact that the recent national wage agreements although lauded to us as considerable successes have fundamental problems and do create difficulties for us from an organising point of view in the private sector on the ground. It is a healthy discussion and I think it needs to be looked at in context. IBOA, the Finance union expelled four thousand members in 1992 following those people scabbing on us after a very, very bitter dispute. Most of the people in this room laughed at our organisation, said we were mad, but we believed in the principal of the trade union solidarity ethos. Indeed, some trade

unions went behind our backs to try and take on those people and let them join other organisations. And, in fairness to the Irish Congress of Trade Union they stood steadfast to ensure that that wouldn't happen. But we have to build our organisation from the ground and it does require radical change. Over the last ten years we have taken on three specific organisers with a view to try to organise on the ground against tremendous and fundamental pressures. Pressures on our members to go for interview where they are asked by their employers are they prepared to resign from the union and we can do nothing about it because there is no legislation to protect them. We have also put significant resources in putting in place campaigns to support our members. We have also put a number of initiatives to make trade unionism a reality. But again more and more as it has been identified, there are different models to address the situation. So it is not a criticism of us or anybody else if we are not part of this initiative. This initiative has its value but it has its value in a particular manner and I am sure that all of us as trade unionists will interact at some stage in relation to that.

And, on the question of social partnership just to conclude – I think it is interesting that everyone of us recognise that is our legacy going to be a trade union movement that has successfully come out of the most successful economic boom in this country, and what we have to recognise and have to deal with is initiatives ourselves to organise because there is no support from Government who is supposed to be our social partner to give two legitimate rights – the right to be in a union and the right of Shop Stewards to be protected. I believe our strategy should not be one dimensional. We can support organising initiative but we must get real at national level and address those fundamentals to help us as well. Thank you very much colleagues.

John Douglas, MANDATE

John Douglas, MANDATE trade union speaking to the motion. I didn't hear Susie Hall either saying that all our ills stem from national programmes, and it would be far too easy for MANDATE trade union which made a decision not to partake whatsoever in the last discussions on the national wage agreement because we had structural difficulties in our industry with low pay, insecure jobs, poor conditions of employment so we decided we wanted to give our union back to its members and negotiate on a location by location basis. And, we have been reasonably successful but we haven't set the world on fire. Our members are becoming more active – they are voting in their own workplace on locally negotiated agreements and that may not be a model that suits everybody, and as I said, it would be far too easy for our union to stand here and cast stones on the social partnership model which has delivered quite a lot to the trade union movement. Not everything but quite a lot for the trade union movement. My trade union, MANDATE, does not have a principal stance against social partnership but we took a pragmatic decision this time round to make a lone

stand, I suppose, with very, very profitable employers in the retail sector, because otherwise they were hiding behind the social partnership model.

In relation to recruitment – frankly, delegates, we sat on our hands for the last twenty years. The employers have been arming themselves to crush this movement. This movement is under threat and despite their best efforts we still survive and we are still fit and we are still lean and we still have the capacity to organise. I commend the report of Sally Anne. It's a good report. It's something – it is not everything but frankly, if we don't fight for our survival over the next number of years we are going to get a greyer and greyer conference here in year's time with less and less people at it. So I would say to everyone here – if you can't join this initiative, certainly at local level create your own initiative and let's start putting blood right back in to this trade union movement of ours. Thank you delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, there isn't a motion to put to Conference but what we were dealing with was a report, a progress report on the organising and recruitment challenge and I think what we had were contributions on the factors that will influence that challenge. It wasn't a debate about the merits or otherwise of social partnership, it was about the issues that should inform our engagement with this challenge so like many speakers, I would like on your behalf to commend the work that has been done by Sally Anne and her team working in collaboration with a number of union to try and get this initiative off the ground. This is not the sole answer, it's there to support and compliment and encourage further activity and let's not leave this hall depressed. We still have 800,000 people in membership despite everything that has been thrown at us. The challenge for us is to increase density and to arrest the slippage that has taken place and, as many speakers have said, that is within our gift – we don't have to go to anybody else to ask for assistance. There is enough scope there to increase the capacity and I am glad that Stevie's intervention did prompt a debate because I think this is the type of discussion that people were looking for earlier on when they were contributing to maybe changes that are needed to the format of this Conference going forward.

So thank you very much for the contributions and can I take it that there is commendation and support for the initiative and launched by Sally Anne.

If I can go back to the motions and invite SIPTU to move Motion 12.

Joe Cunningham, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Mr President, delegates, Joe Cunningham, SIPTU moving Motion No 12. I think it is very important in the context of the discussion that has just taken place that I clarify exactly what we are talking about here in Motion No 12. We are most definitely not talking about facilities for Shop Stewards. We are in fact talking

about prioritising the right to organise and getting statutory protection for our Shop Stewards and representatives in the workplace. And why would that be important?

Well first the question that has to be asked, and I am conscious of the fact that if I was sitting down there where you are sitting now, I would be saying, ah, a motion on organising – motherhood and apple pie, sure we are all in favour of it, why would they even listen to it, it will be a yes. Well I think we should listen to this discussion for a couple of minutes for a very simple reason. The question that first has to be asked is have we made the right to organise a priority in the trade union movement? And if I was to ask the question if we got to the state in national negotiations where what is being sought in Motion No 12 was to fall off the end of the table, would we walk away from those discussions? And if the answer to that question is no then in my opinion that is the wrong answer. And it is the wrong answer for a couple of very important fundamental reasons.

If we for a moment analyse our interface in the private sector with employers and, we have seen from Sally Anne's magnificent presentation, what is actually happening to us in the private sector and we take the element of that sector where we are organised and we see that the employer whose does recognise us is looking enviously at his competitor who operates in a non-unionised environment and our employer in the unionised one perceived a huge advantage for that competitor, and therefore what is he going to do about that? What he is going to do about that is very strategically set about undermining the interface of the trade union movement i.e. Shop Steward and the representative. And those circumstances what protection do we have because it is becoming an increasingly difficult situation for the Shop Stewards and representative because they are faced with many threats, not just from management but from new workers entering the workplace many of whom are agency workers, whose terms and conditions of employment are far inferior. So, in those circumstances even in an organised environment the job a Shop Steward is becoming increasingly difficult but that pales into insignificance when compared to the job of the Shop Steward or representative in a non-unionised environment. And, here delegates, the ant-union employer really shows his true colours. What can you look forward to if you are the representative in a non-unionised employment. You can look forward to being humiliated, you can look forward to being discriminated against, getting the sack and when all of that is done, there is more because you will be put on a blacklist when you go looking for future employment and believe me the blacklist is alive and well unfortunately in our country.

And for our colleagues and delegates from the public sector – don't take any comfort that I am just talking about the private sector here because similar situations could visit you in the not too distant future, and that is why I am trying to explain here in moving this motion, how critically important it is that we get statutory protection for those people because if we fail to do it we are going to find ourselves continuing to being in decline. But if we manage to secure for

them – those courageous people – who are standing up for their rights and the rights of their fellow workers then we have some chance. Now what happens if you take as I have explained to you, the sequence of events, humiliation, discrimination, the sack and then blacklisted. What recourse have we? We go off to the Employment Appeals Tribunal and a victory, a victory for the trade union movement is to win the case at the Employment Tribunal and somebody gets a small sum money by way of monetary compensation but in the meantime back at that workplace where we were trying to organise nobody else is prepared to put their head about the parapet. And that's why we need statutory protection for workers if we are going to make any inroads into those statistics that have been provided for us today by Sally Anne.

So, I would argue delegates if we are going to rely on our social partners to do something about it let me instance you an example. The very minimalist protection that is in the Labour Relations Commission Code for the protection of Shop Stewards was not allowed to be included in the documentation on the recent national agreement because it went against the agenda of the employer. And absolutely right – why wouldn't they? Because it doesn't suit what they are at and they are not going to increase this movement for us, and they are not going to do something about protecting those people. We are going to have to do it ourselves and that is why I am arguing that support for this motion isn't just that we are all in favour of organising. It is recognising that when you support this motion you are actually saying that the right to organise and the protection, statutory protection, of Shop Stewards has to be a priority to Government going forward and has to be an issue that if it falls off the end of the table we walk away from those discussions. That's how fundamentally important what we are talking about here today is.

So, delegates, I urge you to support Motion No 12, the Right to Organise and I also seek support for Motion No13 in the name of Dublin Council of Trade Unions, which is an equally important motion in my opinion. Thank you very much delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Will you formally second. Can I have a formal seconder for the motion? Yes, ok.

Ethel Buckley, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

Ethel Buckley from SIPTU speaking to Motion 12 on the fundamental right of workers to organise collectively. Delegates, as trade unionists we know that strong workplace representation in the form of a committed and effective Shop Steward is the key to workers' strength in the jobs that we organise. And we also know that the work of a Shop Steward in an organised employment is extremely difficult and thankless and it often draws very heavily on the personal resources of the Shop Steward. The reality, delegates, of being a Shop Steward in a job

that is being organised or that is recently organised, is doubly hard. As well as the difficulties that all Shop Stewards experience, activists in a job that is being organised regularly face massive pressure from their employer to turn their back on the union. And, I think it is fair to say that Shop Stewards who are organising in the private sector feel that pressure from their employer very hard when they are trying to organise collectively with their colleagues. And, it is also very difficult for a Shop Steward in an employment that is being organised to convince their fellow colleagues of the benefit of joining a trade union. And, on top of that to convince their colleagues to stay the trade union, often through a long and difficult process while the union is winning the right of recognition in the job. That can be extremely difficult. And, I believe that unions owe a huge debt of gratitude to the workers who go the distance and who successfully organise their employment into the trade union movement. And these workers need strong protection, they need statutory protection, they need legislation but I would argue that these workers also need the best possible chance of a successful outcome to their organising drive. Because if you think about it delegates, if we are going to make a shift to being organising unions and to reach out to workers in Ireland and saying you need to join a trade union, this is the most effective way to ensure that your terms and conditions of employment are decent and that the employers don't succeed in dismantling all that we have fought for. We need to be able to assure those workers that when they do organise with us in organising trade unions, that they have a chance of a successful outcome. And, we need to reassure workers who put their head about the parquet, who put their head on the block and say yes, I will be the Shop Steward in this employment that is organising currently, we need to assure those workers that we are committed to the most effective, properly resourced organising campaign that our unions can muster. They deserve that. Workers who put their hand up are entitled to that, are entitled to that protection from their own trade unions.

And, delegates, this of course brings us to the issue of money because properly resourced, properly strategised, properly planned organising drives take time, they take people and they take money. And, if we are going to start organising, the model of organising that will be successful, that we can feel the research internationally that succeeds in other countries we need to get serious about putting resources into these campaigns, and we need to properly train Shop Stewards who go the distance with the trade union and who put their hand up and say, yes, I am willing to take the risk personally in my job to build a union in this job. So, I would urge you colleagues to support this motion. I think it is a crucial motion on the fundamental right of workers to organise. But, in supporting the motion I think you need to think about what that means. I think you need to think of what that means for individual unions and what it means is making a commitment to being an organising union properly resourcing, properly planned and properly strategised our campaigns so we can go to our Shop Stewards and say you have a good chance of success if you organise with this union. Thank you colleagues.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

There are a number of other speakers that are showing and I am going to ask you to keep an eye on the little digital clock that's on the right hand side, and when that reaches zero to finish up because we do, with respect to the speakers that were due to speak this morning, we want to take them before the close of business this evening.

Alice Irving, UNISON

President, delegates, Alison Irving, UNION supporting Motion 12. The right to organise is fundamental to the continual growth of all unions. I work for UNISON as a Branch Development Organiser so it is very relevant to what I am doing. The research carried out by LIFT which is documented in the BDC Report, Section 2, Chapter 1, if you want to look it up, gives a very comprehensive overview as to how trade unions are doing in the 21st century, along with the report we got earlier.

I would like to bring your attention to figures 6 and 7 – why people don't join unions and why people did join a union. In figure 6 the statistics show that the biggest proportion of people did not join because they were never asked. Figure 7 shows that the main reason people did join is because they were approached by a Steward in their workplace. So, to put it simply, we need to have as many Stewards as we can in as many workplaces as we can to speak to as many staff as we can. These Stewards need to reflect the diversity of their workplace, particularly women, the young, migrant workers, minority ethnic, disabilities, lesbian and gay communities. It sounds simple but in the real world things are not that simple. If the Steward's base is not grown and developed union density will continue to decline despite all the very good and wide-ranging work that is done by UNISON and other unions on behalf of the members they represent. If we do not tell the workforce what we have done and continue to do in their name, then why should we expect them to feel that unions are relevant to their needs today? We need to communicate more with our members. Communication is a two-way process. Unions have to have Stewards based in the workplace. Stewards that are given the time and protection to do this job, to listen to our members, to deal with their issues, tell them what the union has to offer and how the union can help. But most of importantly to encourage members to get involved, to become active even in the most smallest way, to become the future of the union. Statutory protection against discrimination and dismissal is vital for them. When release is given by an employer the Steward needs to know that it is a right by law for them to use it on behalf of the union to do the work of the union. You would think that it wouldn't be a problem in the public sector. It's not exactly a new concept there but all sorts of excuses are given by management to deny and hinder our Stewards from using that facility time.

The scenario is even worse in the private sector where many employers do not recognise unions and actively discourage and threaten staff from joining the union. This is where better protection for Stewards is of the utmost importance. Organising effectively, utilising our members as our key resource. This is how we will ensure that unions are a force to be reckoned with in the 21st century. Thank you Conference.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

And dead on the three minutes, Alice, well done.

Ray Rafferty, UNISON

President, delegates, Ray Rafferty, UNISON supporting Motions 12 and 13. I want to ask you all a question and the question is how do you protect your members if you can't protect your Stewards? I'm lucky. I have been involved in the trade union movement for over thirty years and I had legal protection from the first day, as a Health & Safety Rep. On the simple grounds of equality why can't Stewards be afforded the same protection as afforded to Health & Safety Reps? They do some of the hardest work, they go out and recruit, they are the unsung heroes of the trade union movement and get no protection whatsoever. They are used by our members, they are abused by their employers and what do they actually get at the end of the day? An awful lot of them get a boot in the backside and told there is the door and away you go. It is now time that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions move forward in protecting the hard working Stewards within the trade union movement across Ireland.

I would like to finish off on a personal note. As the comment about the social partnership earlier on. As someone from the North, I wish we had social partnership for twenty years. I wish we had a Government for the last thirty years. If we had maybe we wouldn't have the problems with the public services, with education, with health, that we are now faced with. The massive years of underfunding where peoples' health, welfare and rights went to the wall. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much Ray. Three more speakers.

Terry Delany, Communication Workers Union

Thanks Chair. Chairman, Conference, Terry Delany, Communication Workers Union supporting Motion 12 and also Motion 13. I just want to commend SIPTU and particularly I thought the mover of the motion summed it up very well when he talked about the requirement for statutory legislation to protect Shop Stewards and Organisers.

I will just give you some small examples in my own union. We were seeking to organise in a call centre industry, a very difficult industry. A lot of them have migrant workers involved in it. And we do that by way of initially having our Organising Committee outside of these call centres handing out leaflets, telling them what the union is about and inviting them to meetings. Simple enough in a democratic society you would think. We have had the experience of our organisers being forcibly ejected from outside these call centres by people, thugs masquerading as security people. We have experience of people who are witnessed by the employer on taking a leaflet, engaging in a conversation with one of our people being grilled when they get inside the door as to what the conversation was about, and being told in no uncertain terms that even if they think about joining the CWU they will be sacked on the spot – no messing around about it. We have had reports from situations where we changed our tack a while ago and we invited some people along to an evening in a hotel just to let them get to know the union. The employer got to hear about it and he strategically placed managers in the foyer of that hotel who eyeballed each and every one of their young employees coming in, and you can be sure that an awful of them did a quick u-turn. Those who didn't and stayed on and had a cup of tea and had a chat were immediately cosseted the following morning in their workplace by the employer wanting to know what they were doing talking to a union rep. Now we pride ourselves on living in a democratic society. We pride ourselves that that we are the largest civic society on this island. We are but we are also an organisation that one can forfeit their livelihood simply by going out seeking and requesting people to join our organisation. There is no other organisation like that in this island where you can forfeit your livelihood simple by joining us and if that doesn't require statutory legislation I don't know what does.

I am thirty odd years involved in the union and it is only in recent years in the course of my work that I have gotten involved in this organising along with the young kids that we have doing it for the union. And it was forcibly brought home to me a while ago when I met a group of young people encouraging them to join a union. First of all was their insistence that they would have to meet us off-site at a secret location. Secondly, the look of absolute fear in their faces when I was telling them they didn't have to worry about their employer that we would sort them out. How will you sort them out? Will you tell us how to stop us from being sacked? And the truth of the matter is that an awful lot of them didn't join the union. Not because they didn't want to join the union. It's because they were fearful of being sacked for joining the union and that is something that we are going to have to come to terms with in Sally Anne's excellent report which covered a whole range of things but one of the things we have to come to terms is that fact of the matter is that we may pride ourselves and we pride ourselves in being social partners but we are second rate social partners. Second rate social partners – we don't have the same status as the Government or IBEC. I will just give you two small examples on a broader scale. Shay Cody and I were involved recently in having talks with a well known multi-national firm who were taking on

some work in a company that is organised and very well organised, there was work being outsourced to them. And naturally enough Shay and I sought to try and get involved in this. They gave us all the pension rights etc, etc and they were prepared to give us all the guarantees under TUPE. And even to the extent of recognising the union for the people who are moving across and we asked them what about opening it up and I queried them as to why it is that they recognise unions in Scandinavia and interact with those but they don't do it in Ireland, why is that? And I was given a very simple explanation as far as they were concerned. They said it was simple – we adopt the European model in the Scandinavian countries and we adopt the American model in Ireland. That was their explanation.

Finally, Chairman, unless we get statutory protection for our Shop Stewards and our activists, as my General Secretary said earlier, this movement will move alright, we will keep moving downwards. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

With your agreement I want to take these two final speakers and then I want to move to the Guest Speakers in according with Standing Orders Report No 3, Paddy.

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, Building and Allied Trade Union

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, BATU. Like most people I didn't intend to speak. I do think Motions 12 and 13 are real motions despite what we heard earlier about going through the motions. They are also hardy annuals. We have had them down through the years. We have had them in our own unions and we certainly had them at ICTU conferences. Nevertheless, they are relevant for all that. At the end of the day, as unions and, as in my case as a senior official in the union and I am sure this goes for all my colleagues, we depend, the organisation depends on members who are prepared to give their services, put their jobs on the line and risk a lot of harassment for the union because they are committed for what the union stands for. It is an increasingly legalistic workplace. There phrase that we hear now about a "duty of care". It is a phrase I particularly dislike but in this case I think that it is relevant. If we allow individuals, men or women, to represent our unions as Shop Stewards or as workplace representatives – that's officials and unions have a duty of care towards those people and we must do everything we can. We must pull out the stops to protect them whatever what we can. Now, the movement has changed in recent years and it will change in the future, but if the Irish trade union movement is going to survive and prosper it is going to needs the services, the commitment of people who are prepared to put themselves forward to represent their union. Our union will be voting in favour of both motions. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Final speaker on Motion 12. I am just going to remind you that Motion 13 has not been moved and I will come back to that in a second.

Philip O'Rawe, Connect

President, Conference, Philip O'Rawe from Connect. I just want to pick up on one of the points that is coming out in this debate and it is really about the more subtle forms of discrimination and victimisation of Reps. My union organises in the private sector exclusively in the UK in the communications industry and what we find is one of the biggest if not the biggest barriers to people becoming Reps is the fear factor. Fear of employers damaging peoples' careers even if they were only going to take a very minor role in the union – half a day a week – there are even no official facilities time, that fear factor is the killer in terms of Reps coming forward. The sorts of things we get in the companies we organise in are performance pay systems where it is very easy for the management to discriminate against individuals and very hard for us to prove they have been discriminated against. We get all the performance management systems, we get all of the mad American schemes that are designed to keep unions out of the workplace and designed to keep people from coming forward, so really I would encourage people to bare in mind that, as well as the very overt and blatant forms of victimisation, those subtle things can be very damaging and equally prevent Reps from coming forward, so I would urge you to please support.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Before taking the vote, can I ask Dublin Council of Trade Unions whether they would be prepared to accept the formal moving and seconding of Motion 13 because I think there have been quite a number of speakers supporting of the sentiment. Is that acceptable? Ok and it is formally seconded as well.

On that basis can I vote first of all on Motion 12, all those in favour, against, and no abstentions? Ok. And Motion 13, all those in favour, against, and no abstentions?

Ok, in accordance with Standing Orders Report No 3, I am now going to call the first of our three speakers to finish this session which is Elaine Harvey from the Congress Centres Network. You are very welcome Elaine.

Elaine Harvey, Chairperson Congress Centres Network

Good afternoon delegates and officers. I know you have had a very long day so I will not be too long. My name is Elaine Harvery and I am the Chair of the Congress Centres Network. In the report on our activities for the last two years it is mentioned in pages 64 and 65, and I know in your packs you got a series of

documents including a one that says "Trade Union response at community level". The report and those documents give you the technical things we have done over the last three years. What I would like to do in a couple of minutes is to talk about some of the coal face work we have been doing in the Centres around the country on behalf and with the support of the trade union movement. And I also want to look how the Centres fit in to the Conference theme of Equality for All.

When we started the Centres we were called the Centres for the Unemployed and in the last three years we have changed our name to a variety of names from Congress Centres to Resource Centres. But, some of the things at the core of our work haven't changed. We are staffed mainly by people on community employment programmes and within that it is not just unemployed people who we now deal with. We are dealing with people with disabilities. A lot of the people who work in the Centres around the country come off disability payments and we probably work with the most hidden of all disabilities and that's people with mental health issues. I think that it is absolutely incredible in the work we are doing with people because we are taking people who really don't have any opportunities to move into the open labour market, we are giving them work and watching them blossom. Community employment has about 30% placement rate i.e. to move from that into work – about 30% of them. Within the Centres it is 70% plus. So I think the work we are doing and the opportunities we can give are really making a difference to people. Working with me is a man, David won't mind me mentioning his name, but he was out of work for a couple of years because he lives with schizophrenia for over thirty years and he has proved to be an ardent worker for equality. He does work on the Equal Status Act and I know that there are employers around who know him now and cross the road because he comes after them he is like a dog with a bone – he doesn't give up.

Also, our services are being provided more and more for the migrant community with the new communities that have come to work in Ireland, and my own Centre has recently been funded by Pobal to provide a migrant information support service and some of the stories we are hearing, as I am sure you have heard, one of the biggest issues in the five weeks that the service has been up and running – we haven't had to advertise it – people have found us in Galway from the top County Mayo right down to County Cork. We are working with undocumented workers at the moment. In County Mayo, I am not going to even mention the nationality except that they are Asian, there was a whole community, husband, wife and children who have lost their documentation for one reason or another and are working for the princely sum of three euros fifty an hour and it certainly has influenced the workers in the Centre. In fact, through our own union, SIPTU, we have put a motion to the Conference, our Biennial Conference this year, about looking for an amnesty for undocumented workers. And, I know that that experience is not just in the Galway Centre but right across the Centres.

We also participated in the report, if you look, on the agency staff. It was through the Centres that we were able to take those questionnaires, put them out, and

get responses which fed into the experience of Congress and Esther Lynch in the Education Office to back up changes that she was looking for around agency workers. Those sort of links with the trade union movement, as it says, we are a trade union resource at a community level and it is extremely important to us and I believe extremely important to you.

I would like just to commend all of the Congress staff who have worked with us over the last three years and support the work that we do. It has allowed us to move on and who have allowed us to keep that faith more strongly within trade union movement. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I now invite Rhona Donaghy on the behalf of the Congress Women's Committee to address Conference. Rhonda, you are welcome, and again apologies for this morning.

Rhonda Donaghy, Chairperson of Congress Women's Committee

Thank you President, Vice President, guests, delegates, brothers and sisters. Rhonda Donaghy, Chairperson of the Congress Women's Committee in the South speaking on the section on Equality.

We are all aware that in this year 2007 of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. There have been many advances. There are now many measures to tackle blatant discrimination. These are not handed to us by a largely male legislative deciding to fix these wrongs but by women themselves carving out a path forward so that we can take our place in the sun. Plus we now have pretty comprehensive legislation outlining discrimination on the nine grounds in the normal employment context. More recently we have a new hard won agency to enforce compliance with a wide-range of fairly good labour laws that were in some respects flouted or ignored in the knowledge that they were being inadequately policed. However, the sunburn that we face comes from entrenched attitudinal bias, often worse because it is hidden and because we actually believe we have crashed upwards through that glass ceiling, when in fact someone has tightened the seatbelt around us to keep firmly on the floor.

As the worlds get smaller and more of our sisters are on the move, we are painfully aware that the majority are moving into jobs in which the pay and conditions fail to recognise women's rights and workers' rights. Well, many countries have signed up to the UN Convention on Migrant Workers, many more have not. Exploitation of these women needs to be ended and their rights copperfastened with worldwide enforcement of good employment standards and contract compliance. If, in fact, non-compliance, contract compliance in all workplaces should carry heavy fines up to and including jail sentences. Caught up also in the muddy waters of casualisation through agencies. Agencies,

delegates, taken to their base level are the pocks on the sore of civilised society. We to look seriously at ways to stitching agencies to respect pay agreements and future partnership agreements no matter where these agencies are registered. If somebody secures employment through an agency and works in this country they are entitled to the same terms and conditions of employment as non-agency staff. Women are experiencing all sorts of discriminations brought back to life by employment agencies, for example, the non provision of maternity leave. While constantly striving for an equal distribution of wealth, comprehensive childcare and adequate pension provision, we must never take our eye off the fact that women have achieved these in some Northern countries such as Sweden and Denmark. We need to look at similar levels of standards of social provision as well as how to provide them and make them work in this country.

Congress has traditionally been at the fore of fight for workers and now must look at addressing imbalances and rolling out the relevance of the trade union movement to all our sisters whichever employment they are in. While we all recognise the high turnover in certain parts of the workforce and attract to our numbers by making the trade union movement relevant to all the various groups so that we can retain these non-traditional groups of employees. Rather than selling the trade union movement crudely as wanting to attract members for density purposes, actually making the union relevant will reap its own rewards. For example, through comprehensive workplace agreements, joint Labour Committees, registered employment agreements and employment regulation orders. The employment rights agenda in *Towards 2016* included provision for the delivery for the Code of Practice for domestic workers. Delegates will be very well aware that this is an area where heretofore these workers did not receive the attention they deserve and it has become a haven for unscrupulous employers to exploit migrant women.

Within my union, SIPTU, I work with organising and representing domestic workers and was very pleased to have worked the Congress group on the development of the Code of Practice through the LRC. This Code, delegates, however, must be policed and on our watch.

Congress did themselves many favours two years ago by putting more women in the picture by electing more women to the Executive Council and ensuring that there will be at least be two women on the General Purposes Committee, a woman Vice President plus one other, and for the first time electing two Vice Presidents, both of them women. And, this year we will have a woman President of Congress who will only be the second woman to hold this position but hopefully not the last as there are plenty more women training to step into her shoes. We wish sister Patricia the very best in her presidency. Thank you delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates can I now invite Berni McCrea on behalf of the Congress Disability Committee to address Conference. You are very welcome Berni.

Berni McCrea, Congress Disability Committee

President, Conference, Berni McCrea, Vice Chair, ICTU Disability Committee. The ICTU Disability Committee is proud to be at the forefront of working for equality for disabled people. The committee agenda keeps track of progress regarding commitments secured in social partnership agreements. We have representation on the National Disability Authority and the ICTU Strategy Implementation Committee for equality initiatives. We have had speakers from the National Disability Authority on the 3% quota and from the Department of Trade & Employment on the Employment Strategy.

In the North we have representation on the Disability Advisory Service of the Department of Employment & Learning and also sat on a Strategy Group which made forty-four recommendations to the Permanent Secretary. Now we are watching carefully to see if these are going to be implemented.

In 2005 and 2006 we ran two very successful seminars on the training and employment of people with mental health needs and people with learning needs. The Committee focuses on progress in the Code of Practice for trade unions on people with disabilities. And, also ICTU contributed to the Citybridges compilation of addressing disability in the workplace. This year, the Disability Committee proposes to hold a joint North/South seminar in the autumn. Disability knows no borders.

Although Government policy has delivered there are still 60% of disabled people unemployed compared to 4.3% of the national average. Clearly there is still a long way to go. Many more disabled people want to work but are unable to do so because of the barriers and attitude they face in work and in society.

A disabled child brought up with the same expectations as a non-disabled child expect to leave school, get a job like the rest of the family, have friends, leave home and become independent. But the majority of them are soon faced with the rejection, the obstacles, the excuses, the gap between them and their peer group widens. They experience feelings of failure, isolation, depression sets in. Instead of a pay packet they are on benefit administered often by people who are not knowledgeable or sympathetic of disability. But disabled people don't want sympathy. They want equality and they want work. Having a job, being able to work, having adjustments made to carry out your job and being treated the same as all other employees without fear of discrimination has formed the backbone of ICTU's work for disabled people.

In this year of Equal Opportunities, ICTU is launching Disability Champions at Work. This has been running since 2003 in the UK and there are now nearly 600 champions trained. What are Disability Champions? They are reps with disability employment and legislation and an understanding of disability who will support and represent their disabled colleagues and ensure that employers are informed and will honour their responsibility to a disabled employee. It was my own union, Amicus, now Unite, where the idea of Disability Champions was born. There was a chap called Dave Parr who lives in Hull and he worked in Aerospace and he was a rep. One day there was a chap came along to him called Simon who was profoundly deaf and Simon, who is a very good communicator, communicated to Dave that he could not carry the work he was doing because he wasn't able to hear. Dave realised his own shortcomings and he went and learned the British sign language and he then represented Simon and the result of that was that Simon actually had an interpreter to interpret on his behalf so that he could get information regarding his job. Now, that is just one story. Stories like this are in their thousands around the country. Currently the TUC run the training courses in the UK and FAS was impressed enough whenever David Joyce approached them. They were prepared to fund the training of forty Disability Champions in Ireland, North and South. I would urge you to read the literature about the Disability Champions – they are outside on the desk, and go back to your workplaces and tell your colleagues about Disability Champions or possibly undertake the training yourselves but do enrol quickly because the places will fill up soon. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I thank, delegates on your behalf, Elaine, Rhonda and Berni for their thoughtful and informed contributions to this Conference, and on your behalf to ask them to convey our thanks to all the members of your Committee, because I think we know that translation of policy adopted at these conferences to practical work is the really hard slog. It is the thankless part of the job that you do on behalf of members but it is greatly appreciated and I would like that you would communicate our appreciation back to them.

Just a few announcements, delegates, before we finish up. I have got a note to say that we need to adopt the relevant sections of the EC Report, that's the appendices and the section on Recruitment & Organising. I thought I had actually done that before Standing Orders Report No 3, but just for the record can we agree that those sections of the EC Report are adopted. Agreed. I don't want to end up like Joe O'Toole. I led with my chin on that so I deserve it!

Secondly, can I draw your attention to the Conference Guide and particularly to the sections that sets out the seminars and fringe events. Today at lunchtime we had a seminar on Equality in the Workplace and tomorrow we have a seminar on the importance on Upskilling for Workers in the Economy. That's being held here at 1pm. Then LIFT is holding their thematic seminar which is being held up at

Sligo and busses are leaving the Great Northern at 1.15 tomorrow afternoon. Then on Thursday we have seminars on the Work of the Personal Injuries Board here at 1pm and then at 5.30pm on Thursday we have the commemoration of the 1907 Belfast Docker and Carters Strike and that will include a photographic exhibition, a short play and a lecture. That is on here at 5.30pm.

Also to remind delegates who are not going to the dinner at Harvey's Point tonight of the inter-union table quiz which is taking place in the Astoria Warf pub which is just down at the bottom of the road here from the Great Northern Hotel and that is taking place at 9.30pm and I am assured that there will be no questions on *Towards 2016* or any of that good stuff to test your knowledge but again people are encouraged to attend that because it is in aid of a local charity that provides support to special needs children – horse riding therapy – so all the funds that are raised tonight are being donated to that.

For those that are travelling to Harvey's Point tonight. The busses, four of them, are leaving from the Great Northern Hotel, I think the first bus leaves at 6.45pm but the busses have to depart before 7pm in order that we can meet the schedule that is being set out by the staff in Harvey's Point for the Reception at 7.30pm, the dinner is at 8pm, and the busses will be returning around midnight and leaving people back to the streets on which the hotels are located. I am informed that there is a number of unions that still have to collect tickets from Eileen and also some individuals – that's representatives that are here and guests – if you haven't done that please do so as you will not entry without to Harvey's Point without a ticket because the number of seats are limited.

Finally, I have a note from Patricia about a fringe meeting on Trade Union Friends of Palestine which is taking place now on the second floor meeting room at 5.30.

Tomorrow morning, as you know, delegates, the Taoiseach is attending and we are asking delegates to meet here, assemble here at and be seated in the hall at about 9.45am in order that he can come in and address the conference and I think he intends to do that just before 10am so it would really help if all of the delegations could be here and seated around 10.5/10.50am in the morning.

Can I conclude by again thanking you for your indulgence, your patience and your courtesy to the speakers throughout the day and I hope you enjoy the evening. Thanks very much – we will see you in the morning.

**Wednesday 4 July
Morning Session**

Michael Sharp, Chairman of Standing Orders

Just a couple of announcements about the morning. An Taoiseach is expected shortly. There is some delay in his helicopter flight because of the weather. But he will be here shortly to address us. After that part of the business we will be moving to the Northern Ireland debate and I am pleased to be able to advise you that Martin McGuinness will be arriving during the morning and will be seated at the top table during the Northern Ireland debate and will then address conference later on in the morning after that debate. So that will obviously affect the programme as it's laid down on your agenda but I trust that Conference will accept that report and allow the President and Vice President to deal with matters as they arise, ok.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Ok, is that agreed? Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Delegates, can I call Conference to order and a message to Seamus Dooley and to Mary Maher from the NUJ from Conference that how delighted we are were to awake this morning and to hear of Alan Johnson's release.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce the Taoiseach, to thank him on your behalf for taking the time out again to come and attend our Conference and I now call on you Taoiseach to address the Conference, and you are very, very welcome.

**Keynote Speech
An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Aherne, TD**

Thank you very much President and I want to thank you President, Peter McLoone and the incoming President, Patricia McKeown and the General Secretary, David Begg all you delegates for the opportunity of being with you today and sorry I was a little bit late but we spent a quarter of an hour or so hovering over Ballymun waiting to get Ryanair out of the way. And we got here in one piece. It is always nice to be in Donegal and can I say, President, with more than usual feeling I am very pleased indeed to be in a position to address you once again this morning. It is an event of great significance and I spent the last nine months fighting hard throughout the country to make sure I got back to Bundoran for yourself.

This is, ladies, gentlemen and delegates, a very important event for the union movement as an opportunity for the Congress family of unions to endorse or

reshape existing policies to identify new directions and I appreciate the substantial ongoing work of Congress on policy papers and events, around public services, pensions, employment standards, productivity and other key issues. The quality of those contributions is very high and, when endorsed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, I can assure you they have a real influence on national debates and I thank all of you for your combined effort in producing these position papers and policies of Congress.

My message to you this morning is about confidence for the future. Confidence is the strength of the economy that we have created together over recent decades. Confidence, in the value of the social progress which that economic strength has made possible.

Confidence, in our ability to rise to new challenges and to meet them together. Confidence, in our own judgement in the face of commentators and others who regularly cast doubt, not only on our future, but even on the reality of our past achievements and how we managed to bring them about. Ultimately, confidence, in the face of change and in the realisation that standing still is not an option, for any of us.

And these of course are the issues that we have to look for in building on the confidence for the future. But I am very confident about the future. There are those who believe that our recent successes are an illusion. That they will disappear and we will be back in our natural order, an Ireland of unemployment and under-achievement. Some of these voices were telling us, not so long ago, that our approach was all wrong, that our national consensus around social partnership was a mistake, that centralised pay bargaining could not deliver. They were wrong then, and they are still wrong and we have every reason to be confident. But we have no grounds for complacency. In a world with higher interest rates, higher energy costs and increasing competition from emerging economies, success cannot be taken for granted and prosperity must always be worked on to protect.

I want to set out this morning, and I very much appreciate the time that you have allotted to me, my reasons for having confidence in the Ireland of the future. I want to set out a programme of steps that we are taking to underpin that confidence with action. I want to present a challenge to the trade unions to confound your critics, to demonstrate that your mission belongs to the future, as well as to the past. And I want to assure you that, difficult and painful as some of the changes we will need to make together may be, this Government is committed to working with you to ensure that change delivers for the ordinary men and women in the country who make their homes and make their living in our country.

I want to begin by reminding you of why it matters that we should manage success together.

The importance of a strong economy, delegate, better quality employment and improved public services can be seen in last week's report from the ESRI on the social impact of our economic development. This clearly showed that economic success has delivered social benefits across society. It concluded that:

- living standards have risen for more or less everyone;
- that full employment and in particular long-term unemployment, has made a decisive impact on social exclusion;
- that people are now more likely to work in a better job than those before us;
- that levels of deprivation have significantly declined in all social categories and social groups;
- that there are high levels of work satisfaction amongst those in paid employment;
- that Irish people are healthier and living longer than ever before;
- that economic growth has had a broadly benign impact on Irish family life and family formation; and
- that there is a high level of social integration in expanding suburban neighbourhoods.

These achievements are not, delegate, an accident. They are the outcome of good policy decisions by stakeholders in Irish society, mediated in many cases by yourselves through social partnership.

The first reason to have confidence, President, is our ability to sustain and improve on these achievements is that we are going to respond effectively to the challenge created by the current inflationary pressures.

Together with my colleagues – the Tánaiste, Brian Cowen and Minister Micheal Martin - I met last week with representatives of Congress and of IBEC. It was a chance for me to outline the Government's commitment to social partnership as the way that we want to do business. We had a frank discussion about the pressures on the living standards of workers and their families; and about the cost pressures faced by companies trying to look at the global challenges and markets of the future. As always, I think in our discussion there were no easy answers. But there seemed to me to be a clear consensus at our meeting that whatever we do, we do not want to go back to the wage/price inflationary spiral that saw real living standards drop by 7%, despite a 77% increase in nominal pay, between 1981 and 1987. We will not reinvent the problem that social partnership was created to solve.

We all accept that the increase in inflation above expected levels derives from the impact of higher interest rates and fuel prices – they cover about 56% of the total, both of which are outside our normal domestic control. But Congress has put forward a number of proposals, of significant proposals. We have agreed to engage intensively with you on this agenda. The Tánaiste and Minister for Finance

has already announced a further increase in mortgage interest relief, benefiting those most exposed to the impact of higher interest rates. The Government has also agreed to frame policy so as to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, adding to inflationary pressures and there are many issues we can confront in that debate.

We agreed that, through the work of the Anti-Inflation Group and the High Level Group on Manufacturing, that we will address some of the key factors under our control. We will meet again in the autumn with the Social Partners to review the progress made over the summer months.

The second reason, President, to be confident about the future is because we are committed, as a Government, to honouring the terms of *Towards 2016* in full, and so to an effective programme to protect decent employment standards in the Irish labour market.

I have made it very clear that the lowering of employment standards does not have any part in the Government's vision for the future of this country.

We are making real progress in doing what we said we would do to maintain and enhance employment standards. For example, we have enacted new legislation to address so called "Irish Ferries on Land" - type situations. We have set up the new National Employment Rights Agency (NERA). We are on target to deliver on our commitment to increase the total number of Labour Inspectors from 31 to 90 by the end of the year. The Inspectors will be based in Dublin, Cork, Shannon and Sligo, as well as the NERA HQ in Carlow. And, as you will have seen from the recent ads, we are aiming to ensure that many of them have relevant foreign language skills. In addition, NERA is already working with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Revenue Commissioners in Joint Investigation Units. So we are very definitely upping our game in a significant way in this area.

I know that there are particular concerns about the potential for abuse of employment rights in the construction industry. We are addressing these concerns. NERA is currently running a major campaign focused on the construction sector, involving 500 site visits to date and the detection of a number of significant breaches of employment law. The Department of Social and Family Affairs are carrying out similar programmes and have undertaken well over 500 employer inspections. In addition, the Revenue Commissioners have devoted more than a quarter of their compliance and audit resources to the construction sector. Last year, 1,200 individuals not on Revenue records were identified; more than 440 were re-classified as employees; more than 450 C2 certificates were refused; and more than 700 were withdrawn.

The campaign is continuing, with a much greater emphasis on information sharing with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and NERA and more joint activities. On top of this, the Form RCT1 is being revised in consultation with Congress and the CIF, to make it more robust and effective. We are making good

progress in ensuring that contractors for public works comply fully with employment standards.

All this said, President, the Government recognises that there is still more to be done in terms of translating what we agreed on in *Towards 2016* into reality. We are finalising, following consultation, the detail of the Employment Rights Compliance Bill, which, among other things, substantially increases the level of penalties for breaches of employment rights.

Agency working, delegates, has a vital role to play in facilitating flexibility in the way work is done. We reached agreement in *Towards 2016* on a framework for the regulation of employment agencies. If it is the case that increasing levels of activity by employment agencies are having a harmful impact on accepted terms and conditions or, again, if we find that non-national workers are being exploited in the way agencies operate, then employers and unions and the Government will need to look again at what is the right balance in regulating employment agencies and agency workers. I understand and appreciate the concern on this and the dept of your concern and, President, I want to assure you that I am committed over the summer months in working with you to finding a satisfactory resolution of agency working in this country.

Setting the right policy requires the right information and evidence. Accordingly, I am announcing today an important new initiative aimed at improving our understanding of the scale and impact of employment agencies and agency workers on the labour market. It will involve a new survey on employment conditions, with particular emphasis on agency workers; adding new questions about agency employment in our quarterly national household survey; and questioning employers about the number of agency workers employed by them, in our National Employment Survey. This new initiative, together with better analysis of other official data, should help us improve our understanding of the emerging dynamic in the Irish labour market, and be able to frame our policies accordingly.

A third reason, President, for confidence in the future is that we are accelerating our drive to develop Ireland as a leading knowledge economy. We recognise the creation of high quality jobs is the best way of avoiding any possible “race to the bottom”.

We are steadily building up our infrastructure, with major investment in our road, rail and telecommunications network. We are dramatically increasing our spending on R&D, this year to €8.2 billion. Our new National Skills Strategy sets out, for the first time, what our education and training systems need to do, to meet our needs as a knowledge-based, innovation driven economy for the future.

And that Strategy has a particular focus on upskilling those already in employment, because remember nearly 1.5 million people in the current workforce will still be in the workforce in 2020. We have committed €2.8 billion in the National Development Plan to this upskilling of our workforce.

In line with *Towards 2016*, we are putting a special emphasis on the most vulnerable, low-skilled sectors and sections of our workforce. FÁS and Skillnets have been asked to bring forward proposals focused on low-skilled workers; and the budget for the Basic Workplace Education Fund has been increased.

I am also pleased to announce today that a new scheme will commence in the Autumn, aimed at alleviating the fees in public institutions for part-time courses, at third level, for those at work who have not previously pursued a third level qualification.

The scheme is currently being finalised by the Department of Education and Science and the Higher Education Authority. The scheme will provide for recognition of prior experience and students will be able to accumulate modular credits. There will be flexible delivery, flexible attendance times and flexible learning support, and courses will lead to awards at levels 6 and 7 in the National Framework of Qualifications.

And building on the commitment in *Towards 2016*, the Programme for Government also includes a commitment to introduce a more extensive new system of means-tested free fees, with a view to enabling more people with work or family commitments to avail of opportunities at third level. The Minister for Education will, over the coming months, look at how to develop this Programme commitment against the backdrop of the 2016 initiative.

A further reason, President, for confidence in the future is that all of us here today share the goal of a sustainable economy, a sustainable society and environment. The key to success in achieving it will be the willingness of our workforce - employers and employees alike - to embrace change. Last month, the National Centre for Partnership and Performance launched a major public awareness campaign around the theme of openness to change, innovation, diversity and learning. As you will see from the television ads, ICTU has been very central to that name and the proactive engagement of the trade union movement is critical to its success. I think most of us realise that it is long past time to throw away the comfort blanket of insisting on the old ways of doing things. The reality behind the competition we face is that it is driven by people who take their comfort from the promise of the new, and not from holding on to the past.

I know that you have particular concerns, also President, about the status of the Charter on Fundamental Rights and I would like to address that issue this morning. I want to clarify precisely where we are on that issue. My objective going forward and into the recent European Council was to ensure that any changes did not undermine the balance and substance of the Constitutional Treaty which I negotiated myself in 2004. I believe that we fully achieved that objective at the Council.

The issue of our position on the Charter of Fundamental Rights during that Council meeting has attracted much coverage, not all of it well informed may I add. The Government's support for the Charter has not in any way diminished. We were happy with it in 2004, we are happy with it in 2007. We are also happy with the mandate for an Intergovernmental Conference agreed at the European Council which will take place between next week and the end of October. It stipulates that the Charter will retain the same legal value as the Treaties and apply to all areas embraced by the European Law and where the Member States apply European Union law, and that's exactly as it was before.

Ireland did not seek any "opt-out" as has been reported in headlines. We simply prudently and sensibly indicated that we would wish to study the implications of the UK position regarding their request to introduce a Protocol on the Charter relating to its scope in UK law.

And while we continue to examine the technical implications, we are satisfied, President, that the text of the Charter itself and the wording to be included in the Treaty appear to adequately define its scope and application. We want the Charter to apply just as we agreed in 2004, no more, no less. I assure you this morning that that will be our objective in the forthcoming IGC and I hope to come out of the IGC exactly in the same position. But, President, I think you will agree that when my good friend and smart colleague Tony Blair, going out the door throws in a protocol about 2 in the morning, it makes me understand that I need just to check what it was about and I did not more than that. They caught me once or twice but I won't get caught again.

President, as we face the challenges of the future together, a clear basis for confidence is the extent to which we have overcome one of the greatest challenges ever to face any country. We have, together, brought peace to this island and opened up a new era of tremendous promise and possibility. And, I want to thank Congress for your work over, as your President said yesterday, the last forty years because in many, many bleak days the Irish Congress of Trade Unions was the one national organisation and the one organisation that represented every single part of this Island that stood and was counted and when that was dangerous and difficult to do. So, today I would like to particularly say all those members of Congress back through those four decades and right up to the present time who helped us to get to this position, my thanks because we could not

have done that if there were not brave people in difficult circumstances who had the guts and the character and the heart to stand up for what were the extreme bullyboys of time. So, I thank Congress for that.

But it is, President, an exciting time - of fresh challenges, new relationships and incredible opportunities. The Irish Government is working in partnership with the new Northern Ireland Executive. By working together, we can develop a more prosperous, sustainable and globally competitive economy on both parts of this island.

A clear all-island dimension is included in the new Programme for Government and in key Government policies such as the National Development Plan. In the coming years, we will see joint investment in infrastructure, in education and training, and in building our science and innovation capacity. We will see better delivery of public services for people in border areas and more co-ordinated efforts to help the marginalised in society on both sides of the border. There will be a greater focus on working together to protect our environment and our heritage.

In particular, this part of the island can be transformed by new, high standard, inter-urban transport links between Derry and Donegal. This is part of an innovative cross-border North West Gateway Initiative, and I think this particular part of the Island will benefit hugely as we work through the next decade in seeing the success of the National Development Plan.

Already, potential is being translated into reality. Since April, pensioners have free travel throughout the Island. In the next few weeks, the cross-border motorway between Dundalk and Newry will be opened – I think it's the August weekend. A single energy market will come into operation later this year.

And, these are all real projects with real benefits for people, North and South.

I hope to see further positive developments when we hold the next meeting of the restored North/South Ministerial Council which hopefully will be later this month. And I want to say that I am totally committed to everything on a North South basis. I think for the future all of us in everything we do, without in any way being threatening or forgetting the rules of consent that we have signed up to and in no way being trying to intimidate anyone, but if we think everything we do on North/South basis we have a huge chance of transforming this Island for the better and transforming all your membership's lives for the better in every way.

And, I want to salute and pay tribute, as I said, to your contribution, as I said the contribution of all trade unionists as a key all-island institution, you have been the bulwark against sectarianism and a reminder of the shared hopes and needs of working people of all traditions. I believe that the trade union movement will continue in to the future to play an enormously important role in all-island developments as we enter this new era.

Already, we are working with Congress to see how we can advance the potential of the proposed North South Consultative Forum. You have an honourable record in working impartially for peace and justice during the bad times in the North. As a major all-island organisation, we need your continued engagement in the work of peace, reconciliation and co-operation. I am certain that you will continue to play your part. And, I am glad to say that with my good friends Martin McGuinness and Dr Ian Paisley that we will be able to bring all of this forward successfully and, I must say that both Dr Paisley and Martin McGuinness have both indicated to me in several discussions in recent weeks that they are totally up together in the joint position that they hold over the Executive of working on a North South basis. There are no difficulties – we are not having any wobbles, people are totally committed to this. So, I really think over the next few years we can make big progress in this area.

President, a fourth reason for confidence is that we have a good public service but we can - and must - make it better.

I am proud to be, and to have been all my working life, a public servant. I am proud of the traditions and achievements of the Irish public service. But I know, as you know, that the people expect, and are paying for, a service that puts the public first. It is no longer enough - if it ever was - to offer the public a service that simply suits the provider. The private sector stands or falls on the goods and services it delivers and the way it delivers them. The public service faces a similar test because, if it fails to deliver, the taxpayer - the electorate - will simply look elsewhere for service; and there is no shortage nowadays of people willing to take up the slack.

And, despite real progress, and I am at pains everyday in the position that I am honoured to hold, I have to fight for the protection of public services. There is not a morning in the Dail that I am not on the barrage of defending public servants and there is always somebody trying to find the one mistake, and of course the one mistake becomes a headline and the other 99,999 are ignored. But, I suppose, that's the way it is and we all have to live with by those rules. But, we also have to fight for the cause and fight for what's being done. We are putting in major investment and the efforts of very many people in the front line are working very hard but, I do not think anyone who campaigned for anybody during the recent Election could say that, for example, that the health service is working as good as it should. Earlier this year, I established a Forum on the Health Sector, on foot of a proposal from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The Forum is aimed at engaging the problem solving capacity of social partnership in addressing the challenges facing the health service in a concerted way, similar to the approach adopted to the broader economy twenty years ago. It could provide, for the first time, an opportunity for the people who deliver the service to help to put this right and I would strongly urge all stakeholders in the state system to cease the day on this one. I believe it can be useful. I am not in a position of changing anyone's rights or conditions in any intimidatory way but trying to work how we can give the

best service – a service that we are all as taxpayers paying a lot of money for but how we try to work it out how we can do it best.

In order to move the modernisation of the public service to the next level, earlier this year, I asked the OECD to undertake a major review of our public service as a whole. The reason we did that was so that we could be able to tell the Irish public service how it compares with the best in the world and that we can make recommendations on we can reform ourselves for the future. There may be some start messages for us arising from the review but we should be prepared for them to be able to give the good news and the bad news and to be able to make the hard decisions on reform if that is what is required. I know that the Congress Public Service Committee and some individual public service unions have already met and made submissions to that review group. It bothers me greatly, President, as I am sure that it bothers you, that the Irish public service is so often the portrayed as slow, unprepared, unprofessional, unresponsive and unconcerned. You and I know so many examples that utterly refute that generalisation. But we do know that there is some truth in it, also. The future of the public service, the quality of its employment and the continued flow of its funding can be assured only when the quality, efficiency, productivity and responsiveness to the citizen are transparently beyond challenge. And that is the test. Your President has been strong on this issue for some time and I agree with his analysis rather than going back to it all. If we act on it, there is no reason to doubt the future for our public service at the heart of a stronger Ireland.

The final reason that I am confident about the future, and invite you to be also, is that I believe in the continued relevance and effectiveness of our social partnership process. The terms of our Agreements over the years have changed in line with changing needs. What has not changed is the challenge of producing Agreements in which every partner can identify sufficient progress to make participation worthwhile. What has not changed, either, is the chorus of those who say it cannot be done, when what they really mean is that it should not be done.

I want to congratulate your President, in his role as General Secretary of IMPACT, for the initiative in sponsoring the fascinating insider history of the social partnership process, which has been published with the appropriate title of “Saving the Future”. There is much in that account to bring back memories, happy and otherwise, of the early days of the process and its subsequent development. It reminds us of the debt of gratitude we owe to those who contribute so much to making the process effective. I want to acknowledge, in particular, the huge contribution which your outgoing President and your General Secretary, together with people in leadership positions right across the trade union movement, have made to that process these past twenty years. This goes way beyond negotiation, to the hard work of problem-solving, especially in recent years in the National Implementation Body. This is public service of a high order.

I believe that we were right to move to the longer-term horizon of *Towards 2016*. We need an eye on the medium to long-term while doing our business in the short-term. Keeping an eye on the prize is the surest motivation to deal with the difficulties of the present.

In *Towards 2016*, we have set out an ambitious vision for the future, focused on the needs of people at each stage of their lives. As practical examples, this new “lifecycle” approach means quality, affordable childcare to allow people balance work and caring relationships, while also giving children a good start in life. It means supporting people in work to enhance their skills and career prospects, while ensuring those on low incomes can avail of the income supports and services they need. It means providing certainty for older people that they will get the care they need in a community setting for as long as they possible can. It means supports to allow people with a disability to participate fully in a society.

These are complex social challenges, delegates, which require the State to design and deliver services in new ways, with the individual at the centre. That will require a flexibility to change and work across organisational boundaries. But it offers a roadmap to a better quality of life for the Irish people for the future.

It is a pleasure, President, to be with you here this morning. I sense always your energy and your confidence in the future and in your movement, both in your own work and your papers and your huge attendance in this week in Donegal. I know that you are committed to promoting awareness of the benefits of membership to a much wider constituency. I applaud your particular focus on those who are recently arrived in this country who are otherwise vulnerable in their employment conditions. I know that, like me, you acknowledge the quality employment that so many enterprises and public bodies offer in this country, and the efforts which are made to retain and renew investment in activities which underpin jobs and employments and living standards. I know that is what shapes your understanding of the role of the trade unions in the modern world.

I want you to succeed in your goal. I want a strong and vibrant trade union movement across our country, because I see it as part of a strong and vibrant Irish society for the future. I believe that we will be build, most effectively, on the basis of a trade union movement that is itself confident about the future, which embraces change, which sees the strength of employment protection as resting, not only on compliance with proper standards, but on the renewal of skills, on the successful management of change, and on the realities of the international market environment in which we operate in this country.

I look forward to working with you over the years ahead as, together, we implement our commitments towards one another in *Towards 2016* and I face up to the challenges of the unexpected, as we move forward. There will always be some, but President, I don't share the analysis that around every report and around every issue, no matter whether it is on page one or page nine hundred and ninety nine,

that should become the headline. That we should get up everyday and try to talk ourselves down. That we should every day almost be hoping that we can find some banana skin and that every day if there is something bad then we should all be happier. I work from the other basis – I work from a country where people are fully working, where children are getting a good education, where we can have affordable housing, where people can get their annual holiday, where we can have a good health service, where we have a good welfare service and where we can all do something about that. Sitting on the sidelines or on the fence cribbing and moaning is a lost opportunity. In fact I don't know how people who engage in that don't commit suicide because, quite frankly, the only thing that motivates me is being able to actually change something, to do something about it and its twenty years ago this summer when I set out with leaders of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to do something about our country and to do something about our Island and the fact is, ladies and gentlemen, what you have achieved in doing is where in a country where we have almost full employment, where in the first quarter this year the economy grew by 7%. Practically nowhere else except in one or two regions of China, and they have their own problems where the world grew at that rate. Where we have freedoms, where we have human rights, where we have liberties, where we have peace like we've never had before, where we are generating new ideas and new momentum and that is what we are achieving in this country. You are part of that and lets keep it that. Let's talk ourselves up as a country, lets be proud of our country, lets deal with our problems, lets work for an All-Island economy and let the Irish Congress of Trade Unions continue to from strength to strength.

I congratulate your outgoing President, Peter McLoone. I thank him for a remarkably successful and hugely demanding period in office. I thank him for the work for the work that I have shared with him over the years, even though if we disagree probably 75% of the time, but we do work to try and solve things. I congratulate and give my best wishes to the incoming President, Patricia McKeown, and was delighted to hear and share her views about an Island economy at a meeting last Wednesday. I thank your hardworking General Secretary, David Begg and all his team for the contribution which they make. I always meet David when there are major problems and initiatives but I do admire him and all of the staff in Congress and those across all of the unions. I just wish you a successful conference, and I promise you that as always I will do all I can in the period ahead to make the life of trade union members, the delegates to the ICTU conference and all your affiliated unions a happier life in the Irish society.

Go raibh mile maith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Congress can I now invite the General Secretary, David Begg to give a brief response on behalf of Congress.

David Begg, General Secretary, Congress

Taoiseach, I want to thank you very much indeed for your coming to this Conference and doing us the great honour of visiting us here and in welcoming you to the Conference I want to take the opportunity also to welcome the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach who has been a very good friend of ours over many years – you are very welcome.

Taoiseach, we joined here this morning by a very good colleague Brendan Barber, the General Secretary of the TUC and while not wishing to you know, presume what Brendan would think of your speech, I feel that he would be of the view that if Gordon Brown on entering Government now made the same speech that he would be a very happy man indeed.

I want to thank you, Taoiseach, for your very warm tribute to the Congress for the work that it has done over the last thirty years or so in relation to the difficulties in Northern Ireland. It is a point, I think, which the President made in his speech yesterday. It is very much appreciated that you have made that point and from our point of view we want to do two things – first of all we want to congratulate you on your re-election as Taoiseach and we want to acknowledge the enormous amount of work you have done in presiding over the peaceful settlement of 800 years of conflict really between these two islands and I think that anybody who heard your speech in Westminster would have felt that they were witnessing one of the greatest historical occasions in Anglo-Irish relations – I think probably parallel only and for a different reason by Mr De Valera's reply to Mr Churchill in 1945 – it was for a different purposes and it set the seal on a new and progressive and good period of relations between the two islands and you did us proud, Taoiseach, on that occasion.

Now, Taoiseach, as our esteemed President is wont to say on occasion, a problem shared is a problem abandoned! So when you have taken the trouble to come all this way I think on behalf of our colleagues, I should lay out to you a few difficulties which have been identified to us over the last twenty-four hours or so.

I think first of all Taoiseach we very much welcome the general content and tone of your speech as I have said. On some specific points what you have to say about the Charter of Fundamental Rights was very welcome indeed. There was, I think, some confusion. I think you did set our minds at rest when we met you last week but I think it is very good that you have done so in a very public way, and we could recognise the very practical difficulties of Tony Blair throwing in something at 2 O'Clock in the morning and feeling about uneasy about it but you can imagine how uneasy we felt – you know subsequent to that. But also what you have said generally about designing a strong trade union movement. We recognise and accept that and believe that that is your view. A point of view I might enter on this at the moment, though, is that in the world we occupy at present the balance of power between labour and business has shifted enormously over the last twenty

years or so mainly as a result of the process of globalisation. We don't fit into the knee-jerk category of people who say that globalisation has not produced some benefits – it clearly has for this economy and we recognise that but it is as equally clear to recognise that this sort of power shift has deleterious social effects, the consequences of which are not yet played out and it is quite interesting to see, for example, the discussion now in the United States amongst the democratic party particularly and in the hope of course that they will form a democratic President will come into office next time around from our point of view, but it is very interesting to see people like Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers who effectively controlled United States treasury policy for all of the nineties and took a very sort of pro-market view to reconsider that and on the grounds that the gap between productivity and wages has not closed in the United States, that wages have remained stagnant for the last six or seven years, and being intelligent people they recognise that that is not the way to a sustainable future for that country, and it is for that reason that the democratic party is now calling for more powers for trade unions for collective bargaining purposes. Now I make this point about the United States for this reason because I think it is relevant. In the real world we know that the Government here always has a difficulty balancing the demands and requirements of the foreign direct investment community with the needs of the trade unions and the population – we are aware of that and we realise that and truth be told, for the last twenty years or so, we have gone along with that. We don't like it, we don't like how they have treated us, we don't like their lack of willingness to have us recognised or to recognise our existence at all. We thought, I think and it was a very genuine effort on the part of everybody concerned that the 2001/2004 Acts were in fact a solution and a good solution. They were in many ways an Irish solution to an Irish problem, and everybody was more or less content with that of course until their Lordships got hold of it. And living in the rarefied atmosphere of the Supreme Court, where I suppose most of them have never known a hard day in their lives, they don't understand, Taoiseach, that the world is not a courtroom – they do not understand, for example, that it is not possible for the ordinary worker to come into any court and say yes, I stand up and I give evidence to this effect. They do not understand the tradition of the trade union movement and how back in 1913, when the movement started off, that memorials as they were called, presented to employers had to be signed in a circle so that the ringleaders could never be identified. They are completely immune to that tradition and do not understand it as you do, I know, and as most, quite frankly, working politicians would actually understand, that that is a reality. So they have presented us with a situation which this country doesn't want and we have to confront that situation now because I think, honestly, we have run out of road in terms of our capacity to accommodate a sort of vicotomy between our role in society and social partnership and this lack of recognition for our role in terms of the collective bargaining process.

I was just going to say in relation to a concluding point on this particular matter, Taoiseach, there was a debate here yesterday evening which was very, very interesting at the Conference, because nearly every speaker who got up said “I

hadn't intended to speak but..", and the discussion was all about organising and the difficulties and for me they were all very good speeches – all of them, but one very powerful speech made by a colleague of ours, Terry Delany, because Terry talked about the practical difficulties of trying to organise workers and the level of intimidation to which employers will go to stop people joining unions which most people wouldn't realise is actually happening. And when you see it, and I was reflecting myself back on the time in 1913 when George Russell wrote that famous letter to the Irish Times when he described the workers of Dublin and if you applied what Terry said to that letter you would say that there are a group of employers in this country at the moment for whom things have not changed in any way since 1913 – that is actually the reality of it.

Taoiseach you also correctly identified in relation to the legislative program which is being worked on at the moment on the Employment Rights for which we recognise very much the work that is being done there. There is a couple of things I would say about it. We do have the Compliance Bill to be produced. We haven't actually seen it yet. I would just ask you, I know amongst your many responsibilities you can't be responsible for everything, but just to ensure that that Department does not play kind of funny games with us in relation to that. I say this for this reason – we have gone through a long period of getting this legislation on the statute books – that is understandable and necessary. The problem with the programme is that while it is very good it hasn't materialised on the ground yet and we have to sort of get that through as quickly as we can. And I think on the employment agencies – you are absolutely right and you did reflect the debate we had last week about that. The difficulty about the employment agencies is that they are redefining the employment relationship between the employer and employee and one felt swoop they can come and completely undercut all of the good work that has been done in relation to the legislation which is being prepared at present. There are five hundred and twenty of them in the country at the moment and five hundred and twenty employment agencies do not exist without an awful lot business, so I would be very, very anxious and worried about that. And we really do have to try and ensure that they don't undermine completely the substantial progress which has been made, so you know, I really would appreciate your help on that.

Can I just caution against one point you made. You were saying that a survey is being conducted now to establish the full effect of all of this. The problem with the survey and process of the CSO and Quarterly National Household surveys we have found so far is that it doesn't actually turn up accurate results and because it is based on surveys and we can't really, I think, wait the length of time it would be necessary to gather that evidence to sort of do what we need to do quite quickly, so I would, if I could, exhort you to go further on that if you can.

I completely agree by the way what you say in relation to the economy. I think it is a bad thing for people to be talking down the economy. I think it is not justified for reasons which I will say in a minute. I also want to publically recognise what

you have said about the positive social affects of the whole process of social partnership over twenty years as evidenced by the ESRI report, which most colleagues would not have had an opportunity to see that yet but that tells a very good story in terms of the economic progress and in fact that has been complimented, if you like, by the OECD in the Employment Review which was put out recently, showing, for example, interestingly enough that only two countries – Spain and Ireland – have managed to buck the trend of increasing inequality in wage levels over the last twenty years of all the OECD countries so that is a good story to tell.

We do have, as you quite rightly identified, a problem at them moment with inflation and I have no intention of rehearsing all the reasons for it and so on. You correctly identified a caution on the part of Congress not to do a “knee-jerk” on this and press for an immediate wage increase which might increase or might give rise to a wage price spiral, though I have to say Taoiseach in passing just as an iron law of economics – I have never quite understood how when workers press for an increase in wages it causes a wage price spiral when senior bankers and captains of industry give themselves 58% increases doesn’t. But anyway, as I often say to my colleagues, there is no point in conducting a debate on the basis that the world is fair because it is not but we do need to recognise right enough that there is a problem there. I know you have taken it on board, I welcome very much what you have said Taoiseach that the Government is considering the suggestions which have been put forward by Congress and hopefully we will be able to get into some kind of solution of that.

On the question also of sustainability of the economy I think that is absolutely right. I mean I don’t think there is any need for panic at all at the moment. I think economic conditions are quite good, I think there is a moderation in the construction industry in house building but affordability of houses had become such a problem at the moment that some moderation in pricing would generally speaking be a good thing. I think also that a lot of the forecasters – I mean the thing I find very interesting is that on *Morning Ireland* every morning you have the representatives of the banks, the stockbrokers and so on come on and give their opinion about the state of the economy. Nobody every comes back six months later to say was that right or wrong, because invariably its wrong. They never seem to be able to follow through on anything and it is well worth doing a little bit of research into the real economy and just before this Conference I did check around with some of the County Councils around Dublin, for example, and with the ESB and I found an interesting thing about the real economy. The demand which is agreed between the County Councils and the ESB for commercial industrial demand over the next few years is 800 mega watts of power. Now that is equivalent to about 17% of the total installed capacity of the ESB and that is real demand that is there and if ever there was evidence of confidence in an economy it is, I think, in that particular statistic.

But it leads me to make another point just which I will bring to your attention. The Government's Green Paper, or White Paper at the moment, on Energy Policy is based on three essential principles: security of supply, cost of energy and the environment. And that is right and we would all share that. I don't think any of those objectives will be met by splitting up the ESB to be quite honest. I think this is a time, I think myself this is a company which has served the country very well since 1927 – it should be used as an instrument of national Government policy to achieve those objectives. That would be my view of it and I would ask you to look into that and give some consideration to it.

I notice that during the last IDC, your new colleague, President Sarkozy was coming out with a number of interesting observations, one of which was what did competition ever do for Europe. It smacks a little bit of what did the Romans ever do us, but at the same time, I think Taoiseach that it might be a more reflective point than he has been given credit for. Because if we look at the world at the moment, the huge growth for instance in private equity funds and hedge funds, I think its very distorting of business because we are in a situation now where no company is actually safe from a take-over and the old relationship between employer and employees in the long-term is very much at risk by that and I suspect that that is maybe what Sarkozy had in mind in what he said. This question of the markets and so on make a, what is I suppose between us, is a somewhat controversial point because I think it finds resonance in the debate over health and I recognise very much what you said about the public service, and as you say, our President has quite often come out publically and strongly in favour of reform of the public service and we agreed with you on the establishment of the Health Forum. And, I know from my conversations with the unions in the health sector, that there is a genuine and real desire now Taoiseach to try to reform health and to make sure that in the 21st century with an economy as strong as we have, that we shouldn't have an inferior health service, and we want to make that happen. But, there is one point upon which we don't agree and it is as well to say it because it is, I suppose, not unusual that governments and trade unions would have some fundamental disagreements on some points of policy, and that is in relation to co-location. And the reason – and I don't want to rehearse all of the arguments about it again because you are bored I am sure listening to them and so on, we will have a major debate about that here on Thursday, but just to make this point to you. I mean at the moment we have a point of view expressed by Professor Drumm that we don't need any more capacity into the health service. Now right or wrong we will leave that aside for a second. But in parallel with that, ok, there are eleven private hospitals being constructed. Now if we don't need new capacity why are we constructing the hospitals? Now, I mean it doesn't make sense to me to be quite honest. I mean, let us express Taoiseach, a fear that we have about this. That what the real intention of the architects of that, and I am not saying yourself, I am just saying the architects of that policy, is to create a private market, internal market as it were, in the private sector of the health care in which the HSE can become a commissioning agent and in which the public provision can become a rump service to that. Now if that happens, if that happens I make this point, we

have a hybrid model. This is not an ideological position we have put forward by Congress. We have a hybrid model of health service provision for as long as we know and it has worked. People have arguments about it in fairness but it has worked. Our fear, Taoiseach, is that we will change the balance of public and private in that to the disadvantage in the long-term of the Irish people if we do that.

Now, let me just give you another point about this. Take the case of this generation of people – many of them in the hall here. Most of them you will probably find pay VHI all their lives. We are facing into a retirement period when many people, as you know, have serious difficulties with private occupational pensions. They can find themselves in their retirement not with the means of paying the increased cost of VHI, which will go up. We all know medical inflation plus the 25% increase that's predicted on the basis of the separation, that those people who all their lives have subscribed to the VHI will not be able to have it when they most need it in their lives. Now that is an unintended outcome but if I was you Taoiseach, I would ask the architects of this plan what is the answer to that particular question. I think really that, I think that in many respects this is a very dividing issue in Ireland in the public debate. I mean, from our point of view, we really need to ask the question – do we want ultimately, because we have to look at the ultimate outcome of all of this, do we want to hand the health service substantially over to private equity funds because, as you know, the private hospital – the Mater Hospital – is now owned by private equity funds. I mean, I don't think that is the way to go because the motivation of those funds is completely different and the motivation, even private business, let alone the public sector and I just maybe quote to you the observations of another Frenchman, another French leader. Lionel Jospin, when he said he was in favour of the market economy but not the market society. And, I think myself, the difficulty of co-location is that it does cross that line between the economy and society. And, that is why we are so strongly concerned about it.

Just to conclude on a lighter note Taoiseach – on your return journey I hope that you won't have any more aviation interference from Ryanair. I recall that shortly after the decision or it might have been just before the decision of the European Union was announced about the merger, one of the senior figures in Ryanair made the observation that he was quite sure that this was the sort of political instigation of one of the partners in Government, which I thought myself was extremely unfair to the PDs and I really want to from this Conference condemn that.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you very much David. That certainly does give definition to problem shared, problem abandoned, that's for sure. The Taoiseach has to depart now but I am asking that you would remain because we want to start the Northern Ireland debate pretty much immediately. Patricia is going to chair this session and just to inform you that we did invite the First Minister to attend Conference for this session and he sent apologies that he couldn't because of Assembly work but we got confirmation late yesterday afternoon that the Deputy First Minister,

Martin McGuinness does intend to be here shortly. He wants to sit in to hear and engage with the debate at about 12, 12.15 if the debate goes on that long, he will then make a contribution and a speech to Conference as well. So, I would ask you to indulge with us and not vacate the hall in numbers so that we can get this important discussion underway and to allow the Deputy First Minister to engage with Congress for the first time in our business in an active way. Thanks very much indeed – Patricia.

Patricia McKeown, UNSION & Vice President of Congress

Ok, Conference, could we settle down again please. We are seeking a little flexibility in this part of the agenda and therefore, before we commence directly into the Northern Ireland debate we would like to welcome our comrade, our colleague, Grahame Smith, the General Secretary of the Scottish Trade Union Congress to address Conference. You are very welcome Grahame.

Fraternal Speaker

Grahame Smith, General Secretary, Scottish Trade Union Congress

Thank you very much Patricia. David Begg when he spoke there said that he thought that Brendan Barber, the General Secretary of the TUC, would have welcomed the sort of speech from Gordon Brown that the Taoiseach has just made. And, I think that Brendan Barber would also have welcomed the opportunity to make this sort of response that David Begg made to the Taoiseach. It is a very clear demonstration to me that in a public way, the sort of relationship that a trade union centre can have with a national Government. A frank relationship, a constructive relationship, a critically constructive relationship and certainly a clear indication to me of the sort of relationship that I would like to achieve for the STUC with our new Government in Scotland.

Patricia and delegates, it gives me tremendous pleasure to bring you the warmest greetings from the General Council of the Scottish TUC and from the staff of the Scottish TUC. I am particularly delighted that your Conference is the first of our sister Congresses that I have had the opportunity to address since my appointment since the General Secretary of the STUC. My personal association with ICTU dates back to some memorable joint ICTU/STUC Youth Committee delegations to the Soviet Union in the early 1980s, although the least said about these, the better, through to my attendance at the Northern Ireland Committee Conference in Newry last year, and of course, we have been delighted to have delegates from ICTU attend our Congresses for a number of years now and to have had your new President, Patricia McKeown address our last two Congresses.

And, of course we have the Council of the Isles meetings involving ICTU, the STUC, the Wales TUC and the British TUC which have been important

mechanisms for dialogue between the trade union centres in Britain and Ireland on a range of shared issues we face, industrially, socially and politically, and I look forward to our next meeting because I believe we have much to discuss and much to learn from each other about the response of the trade union movement to globalisation, to the neo-liberal agenda of Governments in much of the developed world, to the privatisation of our public services and to the challenge that all of this poses to union organisation and action to achieving sustainable economic development, and effective social protection and to our demand for equality for all.

Now, it is a bit of a cliché to say that we live in interesting times with a view to the current political situation in Britain and Ireland and that's very much the case. A couple of weeks ago the First Minister of Scotland travelled to Belfast to meet the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. Now the First Minister of Scotland is Alex Salmond, the leader of the Pro-Independent Scottish National Party, which is a surprise enough, but that he was meeting Dr Paisley and Martin McGuinness was verging on the astonishing. Only a few months ago such a meeting would have seemed inconceivable but I suppose it just goes to show that even the seemingly impossible can be possible and that we live in interesting times right enough. I suppose it is to be expected that political leaders will take much of the plaudit for restoring devolution to Northern Ireland and also restoring the peace, and the courage some have shown cannot be denied. But it is nothing to the courage and perseverance shown by the trade union movement in Ireland in striving to overcome sectarianism, to bridge the gap between divided communities and because of our values, our trade union values of solidarity and equality, to continue to believe even in the most desperate of times that peace and progress was possible. Tony Blair may consider that what has been achieved in Northern Ireland is part of his legacy but in truth it is part of your legacy and we should never let that be forgotten.

Now, I mention Alex Salmond, Scotland's new First Minister. Mr Salmond and his Government like many others seem very taken by the example of the Celtic Tiger and have committed themselves to boosting Scotland's rate of economic growth by following much of the example of the policy position in the Irish Republic. Now new Ministers are fond of quoting your gross rate, your employment rate and the productivity of your workforce. Of course they talk less about the persistent income inequality and poverty that you are struggling to overcome and one only has to look at the conference agenda for this week to appreciate that despite the progress that has been made by Irish workers and their unions there is still a way to go. Our new Ministers are also fond of quoting your low business tax, deregulation approach as the reasons for your success, ignoring the other factors involved including of course the role of the trade unions and I am going to take back to Scotland a present for Mr Salmond, a copy of the "Saving the Future" book and I will give it to him when we next meet to make sure he has a more informed view of the reasons for Ireland's economic success as well as an appreciation of the major challenges thrown up by your approach

and of course the role played by the trade unions. And, one of the things reportedly discussed with the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland on his recent visit was the possibility of an alliance by the devolved administrations in the UK to lobby for the power to set the rate of corporation tax or should I say to cut the rate of corporation tax. Of course this low tax or regulation approach to economic success is based more on faith rather than evidence. Certainly in Scotland businesses are neither over taxed nor over regulated. Cutting business taxes will not guarantee the investment in skills or innovation that we need to drive real and sustained growth in our economy and indeed to secure job security. Our economy will succeed not through unjustified cuts in business taxes but by raising employment standards and improving employment rights. If Governments want to take action on business tax they would be better closing the tax loopholes that are exploited by private equity firms. These companies, as I have already said, are locusts. They care nothing for the disruption they cause or the jobs they cost. I can never remember if its tax evasion or tax avoidance that's legal but what I do know is that legal or not, what these private equity firms are up to is wrong, its immoral and it needs to be stopped.

Now, as you will appreciate for the STUC and unions in Scotland dealing with a minority SNP Government will take some getting used to. It is, of course, our intention to engage constructively with the new Government but we certainly can't take our influence for granted. You will have to win the argument and constantly make the case that we should not only be listened to but our actions and concerns acted upon, and that we should be real partners in addressing Scotland's economic and social challenges. If our approach is to be based on winning the argument it will stand or fall on the quality of the intellectual contribution that we can make and I have no doubt about the ability of union members in Scotland to do that. But, we also need to remember that Government and Parliaments in Edinburgh and London are not the only focus for action and I couldn't agree more with what David Begg said earlier on in relation to collective bargaining. Increasingly we will have to achieve and we must be able to achieve our objectives through collective bargaining and culture change at the workplace to secure broader campaigning activity, activity that must be responsive to the changing shape of today's trade union movement and which must address new causes in the workplace such as climate change, skills training, equality, family friendly policies and flexible working. We need to meet the membership challenge head on. One thing that worries me about our movement is that we are becoming a movement for the marginalised, the vulnerable and the dispossessed rather than that a movement of the marginalised, the vulnerable and the dispossessed. Our movement must be genuinely inclusive and representative. We must reach out to migrant workers, to low paid women workers, to those in the private services sector and particularly to young workers. And, of course, we are making progress. Our membership, like yours, is increasing and we have confounded those who have said that there is no place for collective organisation in an increasingly

individualistic society but we need to do more. We need radical new approaches such as those that you discussed yesterday. And we need some serious resources invested in bringing these new communities of workers into the trade union movement. Now there is much we can learn from each other about organising and this would be perhaps one useful agenda item for our next Council of the Isles meeting.

President, Vice President, apologies, it has been a great pleasure to have addressed you this morning. I hope your Conference continues to be enjoyable and productive and I very much look forward to continuing our work together in the future. Thank you very much indeed.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress,

Grahame, on behalf of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, can I thank you for that address. We have enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship between our two Congresses, we look forward to continuing that in the future, we look forward to further work in the Council of Isles with all the trade union Congresses on these islands, and we do look forward to developing a relationship in the North similar to that which Congress enjoys with Government in the South and which you enjoy with Government in Scotland. Thank you very much.

Conference, I do believe that the Deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland is in the vicinity. We are awaiting a signal to be able to also invite him and welcome him to our Congress. At this stage, however, I think we need to commence the Northern Ireland debate. Before you will be Section 4 of the principal EC Report specifically relating to Northern Ireland and Motions 14, 15 and 16 on the main agenda. I may have to interrupt our Assistant General Secretary of Northern Ireland in his speech. He has agreed he will not be offended if I have to do that but at this stage I very much would like you to welcome Peter Bunting who will move this section of the report.

Peter Bunting, Assistant General Secretary, Congress

Chair of Conference, I am delighted to introduce the Northern Ireland section of the Conference at a time when we face ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the next few years. After years of direct rule and the faltering attempts at devolution after the 1998 agreement, Stormont is back at work. We called for it for years. We lobbied, marched, cajoled, complained, urged, encouraged and appealed to our locally elected politicians to get on with and return Stormont to the people. Well last March it happened. The Reverend Dr Ian Paisley shared a table with Gerry Adams and said those four little words that we often thought were unsayable. Today we have agreed. Those four words, though they have added to our workload as well as our political class, first time in three generations we now have the motives, the means and the opportunities to shape a better life for everyone in Northern Ireland with no child or adult left

behind. We can forge a meaningful new consensus as perspective Social Partners, as critical allies and as honest friends with actors in civil society and political life. Together we can work to lift the dead cloud of complacency and the fog of obscurity that is the legacy of thirty-five years of fairly broken direct rule, not to mention a fifty year one party state.

We have an investment in the success of the new Assembly and Executive. We therefore have a duty as serious social partners and individual active citizens to assist and conciliate and cement the best achievable democracy. It's not ideal. We would prefer less confessionalism and more class consciousness, but it is what we have to work so let's make it work. But as we do so let us not forget our core values. We are different people from most elected politicians in Northern Ireland. We do not make judgements based on holy books or territorial ascertations or the perceived pasts of our opponents. We trade unionists do not exclude people. At our May Day parade each year in Belfast we welcome everyone as a potential participant. Die hard unionists and nationalists, seven day Adventists and Anarchists, every human pigment and orientation and opinion – all are welcome because we understand that together we are stronger. That is the unanswerable law that history has taught us – it is old and it beautiful and it sounds like this. We are the party of all labour, the whole earth, crushed by the heels and hoofs of monarchy and reaction. From those heroic struggles came our intellectual and moral DNA. Those battles lost and won by our ancestors, a tap fail, a tall puddle and an hundred years ago on the streets and docks of Belfast and Newry and later in Dublin. That hard fought legacy has given us our core values, equality, solidarity, and anti-fascism. Let us look at where they come from and what they mean for us in 2007. 1907 was the theme of the largest May Day parade in Belfast in recent history. The success of that May Day festival and its associated cultural activities could not have been achieved without the commitment and enthusiasm of many sister and brother trade unionists. You know who you are and we all thank you for your engagement with this ongoing project.

To those who are unfamiliar with the epic story of 1907, here is a two minute version of the tale. A century ago Belfast was paralysed as its Dockers and carters organised themselves into effective trade unions and went on strike for a fairer deal and a better life. Jim Larkin was the catalyst, the spark that soared into the flaming torch that inspired the working class in Britain and Ireland. For that glorious summer Belfast became a byword for radicalism and resolve. The creeds were united. Battle royal was commenced with those heartless, tasteless and ruthless oligarchs rightly denounced as scoundrels by Jim Larkin. After months out starvation drove most of the Belfast men and women back to work. Some were never allowed back to their workplace and were blacklisted forever. But like the 1913 lockout in Dublin, big sweeping epic stories of solidarity and heroism formed the bedrock of trade unionism on this island. Their legacy is in three different words that chilled the envious heart or enraged the frustrated bureaucrat, organised working class. We justly celebrate our shared past and

we ought to take pride in the joint steps made by our founding fathers and mothers, our Alex Bodys and our Mary Galways. What we do not attempt to put men and women into plaster saints. They deserve better than that. We do not know if history will absolve us only through our own actions can we make a justified claim to have shaped history. The solidarity that swept the city manifested itself in tens of thousands marching from east to west, to the centre of Belfast for massive rallies. It entailed the independent Orange Lodge, or Order predicated its 12 July parade to the Dockers and carters in raising vital funds to alleviate the hardship felt by their families. It involved hundreds of policemen who mutinied rather than guard scabs and blacklegs. Equality was at the core of the issue of union recognition where unskilled as well as skilled workers, that the unskilled had the right to organise themselves and were worthy of the same respect and dignity as their more skilled brothers and sisters. This applied in the linen mills as much as the deep sea docks. Fascism is just a glint in an evil eye before the First World War. But the strikers understood that sectarianism was a demon that divided the working class in the city and had to be challenged its vile broke cover. When we slip from those principles we always loose out. An injury to one is an injury to all. We cannot afford to allow the talent or potential of all humanity be wasted by bigotry or complacency.

While the achievements for the good of all humanity have never been realised because of the barring of women. The subjugation of black people and the mass murder of Jews or Roma. Did the cure for cancer perish in the mind of a wasted life forced into domestic servitude? What poetry or music will never be heard drowned out by bellows of racism? Equality works because it allows the human spirit to breath. Solidarity adds the protection and space required for the mind to fully function. Anti-fascism is both the early warning system and the last ditch to secure the lives of vulnerable minorities.

With these values in mind, let us examine our activities and let those three pillars be our internalised system of benchmarking our progress.

The first item on the agenda for the new Executive when it met was water charges. A unified trade union movement worked with the coalition of inspired and inspiring people with a firm commitment to a mass non-payment campaign. We received pledges of non-payment who could not afford the extra water charge but even those who could afford it said No and they made that pledge because of the sheer rank unfairness of the idiotic scheme. That culmination of solidarity with those who could not afford the extra charge, that commitment to equality that demanded a fair system of payment which would be guaranteed by public ownership, that bravery of making a public stand against the determination of direct rule ministers and the pushers of privatisation. All of those qualities were on display. All of those qualities are ready and in reserve if the devolved Executive tries to foist such a flawed and frankly stupid scheme on the people again.

Equality, solidarity and anti-fascism were absolutely at the core of the research we commissioned by Dr Robbie McVeigh into the facts of daily life for migrant workers and how the trade union movement can accommodate itself to the new reality of thousands of new workers in the economy. We have to change to reflect the facts that the workforce in 2007 and beyond for exactly the same reason that we must fully back the LIFT programme in promoting women to all levels in our movement.

It will be to the long-term cost to our strength as a movement for all working people if we ignore the talent and potential within our midsts so we must go even further. That is why for the past few years we have been running a leadership programme reaching out with our expertise and organising to communities whose economic marginalisation since the mass deindustrialisation of the Thatcher regime has been compounded by a political marginalisation as the peace process and its benefits seem to have passed them by. No child left behind is an easy slogan. We have made a commitment to leaving no adults behind either. That is why we have used our good offices to facilitate understanding between former paramilitary combatants to the fellowship of the Messines Association and the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre. That is also why Congress identified and then initiated the opportunity for cooperation between a business and shortages on their order book with the Government, that to be frank many of us workforce would have eyed with suspicion, none the less last Spring a new business partnership was agreed between Bus Atha Cliath and Bus Eireann, and Wrights Bus Limited in solidly loyalist Ballymena.

Deals like this do more than save a few hundred jobs, though that is always welcome. There was, for us there in Ballymena for the signing ceremony, a deeper symbolic resonance as the local MP, Dr Ian Paisley, greeted and welcomed the Irish Minister for Transport, Dr Martin Cullen TD. The Big Man and the Teachta Dála from Waterford got along famously and enthusiastically. More importantly, a group of workers whose suspicion was deeply engrained felt more secure, in their jobs and in their political identity.

There is no threat in cross-border co-operation. If it is carried out properly, it can form a virtuous circle of altruism and mutual self-interest. It works with marketing Ireland as a single tourist destination. It will work as an infrastructural western corridor that includes Strabane as well as Bundoran, that links Londonderry to Letterkenny, and that involves the great hinterland of the border region, historically deprived of investment and trust and care and respect.

It works across the sea, with east-west linkages such as the Trade Union Council of the Isles. It works across the 27 nation states of the European Union, and it can work in many differing ways. We can export good ideas as well as share inward investment.

Why should a central government in Westminster have the gall to draw a 'red line' around the Charter of Fundamental Rights? What nerve does it take to tell the working class of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that they must be second class bearers of the EU passport? What cowardice is shown by this kow-towing to the unelected barons of a largely foreign owned press?

Here is a proposal for the Assemblies of Northern Ireland and Wales and the Parliament of Scotland. If Gordon Brown won't allow the Charter to enter through a vote at Westminster, let our local and accountable democracies act as the back door. Let our Assemblies vote for every dot and comma of the Charter, including and especially Article 28: "Workers have the right to take collective action to defend their interests, including strike action."

We in Northern Ireland are still, almost a decade after the Agreement of Easter 1998, discussing a Bill of Rights. Time's up! Get on with it and include bold, honest and meaningful provisions like Article 28.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress,

Congress, with Peter's agreement I am interrupting his address in order to welcome to our Congress for the first time, the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, Martin McGuinness, MP, MLA.

You are very welcome Deputy First Minister and we know we will hear an address from you shortly. We are delighted you have been able to join us just here at the commencement of the section of our debate on Northern Ireland and at the moment our Assistant General Secretary, Peter Bunting is concluding his opening remarks on this section of the report.

Peter Bunting, Assistant General Secretary, Congress

The new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Shaun Woodward is no stranger to us, especially our members in the health services. Change happens, as we are repeatedly told by this 'new' New Labour government.

Mr Woodward is not taking a ministerial salary for his posting. Let us hope that his efforts are not commensurate and that at least he earns our respect.

Let us, at least, be at our best when we are at our boldest. Let us exercise our talent for creative thought and constructive action and earn our place at the decision-making table. Let us also unleash our powers of facing unpleasant facts. The economy of Northern Ireland needs honest debate and tough choices have to be made. But why, time after example, does necessary modernisation always seem to end with huge salary hikes for directors and lay-offs for those without share options?

Why do we have to put up with gormless blather about Corporation Tax being the magic bullet for all of our economic woes? This issue, this great cause of our wannabee plutocrats, is reminiscent of the belief among Scientologists that we are descended from a mighty alien race. It is faith-based economics. It is pressed especially hard by the tiny minority of business chaps that pay the full 28% of Corporation Tax. However, 96% of businesses in Northern Ireland pay the reduced rate. Well, reason in revolt now thunders, and at last ends the age of cant!

We are not opposed to enterprise or entrepreneurship. We can deal with serious proposals for using grant aid or the tax system to stimulate job creation, innovation, research and development, productivity and exports. We are not, however, in favour of featherbedding speculation or share options.

We speak for over 250,000 trade union members in Northern Ireland in 36 trade unions. We are an open and democratic organisation that serves and speaks for the interests of thousands more working class families. Democracy requires a constant dialectic with all of the organisations, all of the institutions and all of the attitudes that attempt to control our minds and bodies.

That is why we have been in constant engagement with the powers that be over the Review of Public Administration, the stealthy privatisation of our public assets and our common wealth. That is why we have constantly been demanding greater openness and social responsibility from the Strategic Investment Board, the mega-quango that is spending 18 billion pounds of public money on vital infrastructural work.

We don't care if we annoy people when we call for the complete replacement of that Board and especially that instinct for pelf and place. The EU has a series of recommendations on public procurement and we want those adhered to in this region of the EU. Use this rare opportunity to upskill the long-term unemployed and inject life into economic communities of interest that have been on the receiving end of neo-liberalism, privatisation and pelf for twenty-five years.

Be properly inclusive in our workforces. That is why Congress has pressed hard for the reintegration of former combatants into the formal economy and for determined action to target and improve the lives of the 539,000 people of working age doomed to economic inactivity. Why should our society accept a concept of social dumping on such a huge scale, which comprises one-third of the entire population of Northern Ireland?

Skills are part of the answer and skills are also vital for those in work. That is why Congress and its learning centres have reached out to employers to work with us for flexibility. Not the flexibility that you read about in the business pages – ease of sacking workers - but the flexibility for time to learn new skills for a sharper and

more harmonious and efficient and productive workplace. Let the mind burst free from its prison cell!

This is our political mission for the next five years, to make real changes for the lives and life chances of working people across Northern Ireland. To achieve this mission, Congress in Northern Ireland will redirect the necessary resources and restructure if necessary.

Let us therefore think again about the term - 'integration'.

There is more to it than desegregating our schools. I think that it can cover a whole mindset that can challenge the orthodoxies of politics in Northern Ireland and the stilted social organisation and facile economic thinking among those who try to run our lives at home and abroad.

We need to integrate our whole approach to learning from pre-school to retirement. A healthy society ought to have children who are well-nourished in body and mind. A vibrant economy needs workers who are skilled and re-skilled for productive and satisfactory working lives. Neither can work best when fearful. Academic selection at ten years old is as barbaric as McBosses in McJobs dictating the duration of toilet breaks.

We need an integrated society, not just a shared one. We can do better than merely tolerating other cultures and practices. We must learn to embrace the reality of other people as sentient and humane individuals. We cannot afford the false economy of a minimum wage that a scandalous amount of employers do not even meet, nor can we afford to be minimal in our contacts with other cultures. If we are to have a culture based on rights then we must also develop a culture of duty to others and a universal respect for people as individuals.

We will work with all prospective partners, including people that for many years many of us thought we could never work with, nor have the chance to do so. And we can bring with us into the meeting-rooms an ethos of equality and solidarity, and the will to build an integrated society.

This is why trade union organisation is also good for the whole economy, not just our members and their families. Workers that are well-paid, properly skilled, secure, bringing about the best in their individual industry and collective humanity – those are the workplaces that we all aspire to, from the smallest start-up to the most venerable institution.

It's that simple, really. That is what a hundred years of struggle, a century of solidarity, a passion for fairness, an unbending commitment to equality, a sharp eye for injustice, zero tolerance for bigotry, sexism or racism and a solid belief in the dignity of labour - that is what it amounts to.

That has been our story since the women and men of the great and heroic struggles of 1906 and 1907 by the linen girls and hard Dockers of Belfast to that unnamed individual of today, who you all know, who is organising migrant workers toiling at below minimum wage, who is raising our consciousness about current trade union struggles in far off lands, who is running literacy clubs or who is fighting toe to toe with some bullying Neanderthal of a boss on behalf of his members.

La lotta continua. Long may that struggle continue. If it goes on, than so shall we all.

I commend the Northern Ireland Report.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President, Congress

Thank you Peter for that Castro linked introduction to the Northern Ireland section of the debate. Can I now move to the motions and call on the mover of Motion 14, the Peace Process, standing in the name of UNISON.

Pamela Dooley, UNISON

Chair, delegates, Pamela Dooley, UNISON to move Motion 14 on the Peace Process. It was early this year and a bitterly cold day, another deadline had arrived. We were picketing Stormont and the anti-water charges coalition, everyone was understandably pessimistic. We had been relentlessly campaigning for implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Instead we were stuck with another four years of direct rule which had been bad for the people and particularly bad for the public services, hence the picket. And then it happened. Old enemies announce their engagement to the world's press and our world began to change.

As you heard from the President and others, yesterday, this is a change our movement has long campaigned for and is another building block on the road to peace – a very significant one. The world has changed not just for us in Northern Ireland but for both parts of this island and for this movement. From here on we need to do business in a different way and our pessimism has changed to cautious optimism that a new future for all our people is possible – I mean all of our people not just some. We cannot contemplate future where significant groups, particularly working class people, particular those in poverty and particular those suffering discrimination are left behind. This time around we are not starting from a blank canvass. From the British Government's own report we know the patterns of discrimination, disadvantaged and social exclusion are high. They are in the same places as in the past. We have the tools to put that right, to target objective needs and to change the patterns. All we need is the political will to do that. At the highest level in our own Government, the British Government and the Irish Government.

It is fashionable today to talk about North South development. Indeed there has been a frenzy of activity for several years, particularly in the business world. Two Governments and employer organisations, North and South have been developing policy in order to increase business opportunity but the voice of our movement has been largely absent from the process and as a result the rights of workers, their families and their communities on both sides of the border have been ignored. We know in ICTU that the enormous spend of public money by both Governments on procurement and in particular the infrastructure investment strategy can be organised in a way that brings good to all of the people. Proper contract compliance, conditions about jobs, apprenticeships, fair pay, and union organisation can start to build social inclusion where it is needed most. There is also another vital dimension which will cover tomorrow in Motion 45 but which is also essential in stabilising our society. That is a true commitment to a strong public service delivery, particularly in health, social services, education and housing. Nearly one third of our children live on or below the poverty line. Almost one quarter have literacy and numeracy problems. The ageing population has more older people living in poverty and without services. Our new communities face racism every day. Our people suffer some of the worst health inequalities in Europe. In communities already suffering disadvantage there is little or no change of a job.

In the North our public services were a lifeline for all of these groups for thirty years. It is cynical to now target those public services for privatisation because some people will take any opportunity to make a profit, particularly a peaceful setting.

This motion calls on Congress and all affiliates to rise to this challenge. It can make the North a better place to live and it will certainly improve the situation of citizens in the border counties such as Donegal.

Congress, it is in all our interests to target objective needs and ensure that none of our citizens are left behind in what can be a better future for us all. I move.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Thanks Pamela. Secunder please.

Jack O'Connor, Services, Industrial Professional Trade Union

Vice President, Deputy First Minister, delegates, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU seconding the motion and in doing so I want to take the opportunity, delegates, congratulate you Deputy First Minister and all the major actors who brought about the restoration of the political institutions which I believe will pave the way for the ultimate resolution of the issues which have divided the peoples of this island on a peaceful basis.

But the question that arises now delegates is to the nature and character of the All-Island economy and society which will unfold in the aftermath of that success. And we in this movement are well accustomed to being advised of the maxim that labour must wait. We must ensure that we are not marginalised in the unfolding history of this country. We must ensure that we are not marginalised to allow the architecture of the future of this island to be designed in the interests of those whose only interest is speculation and getting rich quick.

We must now allow, for example, the infrastructure and the services of the new economy to be provided at the expense or through the exploitation of vulnerable migrant workers who come to this country to enhance their lives from elsewhere. And the reality of it is delegates, that whereas there have been many disagreements between the British and Irish Governments over the years, there is very little disagreement when it comes to the way workers are to be treated. And, whereas I welcome the remarks of the Taoiseach in relation to agency workers, the reality of it is that thus far the Governments of Britain and Ireland are unique apart from hungry in the entire European Union in refusing to legislate for the principle of equal treatment for workers employed by employment agencies. And the reality of it is I think, as we can all agree, that those who have prospered by exploitation of others have never in all of human history devised so effective a tool of exploitation as the rogue employment agency. And, we have to insist as well on the definition of the role of public procurement given its significance in the development of the economy because the role of public procurement and the way its approached will play a critically pivotal role in developing not only the infrastructure and services themselves but the very nature and character of the employment relationships and the quality of the working environment in the island of the future.

I want to welcome both this motion, to second this motion No 14, and to welcome Motion No 15 in the name of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union and while I am here extending congratulations to people, I want to take the opportunity as well to congratulate my very good friend, Michael O'Reilly and the delegates here from the ATGWU and Amicus on their success in bringing about the important merger which will contribute I hope enormously to the future enhancement of working people in this island. I want to welcome it very much and I want to look forward as the President of SIPTU to working with that union and to working with your own union, Vice President and the other unions in Congress in asserting the entitlements of those who have been forced to wait so long in the history of this island to what they are duly entitled to. And, may I say delegates in conclusion, that that won't come about with all due respects to everybody here by politely knocking on the door. It will come about because we organise sufficiently well to assert that right and a very good way to start, delegates, might be by organising a joint campaign, North and South, and Britain and Ireland, in support of the demand for equality of treatment for agency workers. Thank you very much delegates.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Thank you Jack. I am going to take mover and seconder of Motion 15. Motion 15 – Good Friday Agreement standing in the name of Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union – Unite.

Michael O'Reilly, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union – Unite

Chairperson, Mick O'Reilly, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union – Unite Section – I thought I'd forget that, it's hard to break the habits of a lifetime.

Anyway, just to say again that I join with Jack O'Connor in welcoming the Deputy First Minister here today. And, just to say a word about the Good Friday Agreement and the fact that the institutions have been put back into place. The fact is that the institutions that we have in the Good Friday Agreement didn't fall from the sky. The institutions that we have in the Good Friday Agreement are about trying something new that has been learned on the basis of a long and torturous struggle for equality within the Northern Ireland state and also to bring us all closer together. The fact is that these institutions create a set of circumstances which as far as the governance of the people of Northern Ireland are concerned are quite unique in the sense that every party, most parties, are in the Government. And, of course, when most parties are in the Government the job to some degree of opposition falls to those in civil society. Like, for example, trade unions. Now, I don't want that to be misunderstood because I for one passionately support the establishment of a Government that is inclusive of everybody to look after everybody in Northern Ireland. That is what we got out on the streets and fought for and that's part of the answer to the problem that we have had. But once a Government is there, a trade union movement needs to be able to mobilise its members to make the Government aware of the social and the economic conditions that workers want to see addressed. And, it is extremely important that that's understood. And we have to address the questions of poverty, of job creation and of developing the private sector, not as the paper which was developed by Peter Hain said, on the basis of flattening the public sector so we could get resources to put them into the private sector, but actually on the basis that the things that have held the private sector back – outside investment – have been addressed because we have now peace within Northern Ireland. We have institutions that I believe are durable and sustainable and will help now to attract foreign investment with the rights of workers to organise in those industries. It is extremely important that that is done.

Because, of course, we have to remember that this is but a first step and I would like to liken what has happened in Stormont with the restoration of the institutions, to coin a phrase if I could, that what we are looking at is the united people of Northern Ireland in Government in Northern Ireland looking after the people of Northern Ireland. And, it's a bit sad in a way that one of the first demands,

although I think there is room for this though Peter was critical of it, there is room for a one tax policy on the island, there is room for debate as to what kind of a taxation system we go for. I hope it is somewhat higher than the one we have in the Republic but there is room for debate on this and for all of us to engage with the British Government in trying to convince them that they should look at this but not only that. Of institutions that are common in Ireland, we make the suggestion in the motion that one of the things that should be looked at is the question of a Rights Commissioner. And, let me say that that workers two ways because I think one of the things that should be looked at is the rights that people have in Northern Ireland to recognition should be looked at down here in the Republic because they are more advanced than we are and we should look this from a class perspective, from a trade union perspective and bring our powers to bare on both Governments, North and South to try and advance the cause of workers – that's the way to take things forward. Because, of course, there is no such thing when we talk about the question of jobs, when we talk about the question of poverty, when we talk about the social agenda and the need for inclusiveness, there is no such thing as Protestant poverty or Catholic poverty. What we need is a definition of what poverty is and the institutions of the state to act upon it to lift everybody out of poverty. We need a united demand made by the trade union movement to advance that situation.

As far as the British Government is concerned, I think their message is that they simply want to see Northern Ireland go up the road of a neo-liberal experiment that has been run and has led to ruin in many economies throughout Europe. And I don't think that's a road that we want to support. We must take initiatives to bring people together at community level. We must seek to build bridges between people of Northern Ireland and to move the spectre of sectarianism. The particular initiatives that we are talking about should be grown from the bottom up. If I could just give one small practical example of a bus company in Ian Paisley's constituency, the First Minister. We had great difficulties organising these workers in Ballymena and they found themselves in a situation where they needed work and because of the activity of our Shop Stewards, they came down and impressed upon us the need to make representation to the Minister. We succeeded in getting them a substantial amount of work with the help of our people in the ICTU. And one of the Shop Stewards said to me after it, and this is largely a unionist part of world, he said to me if this peace process and these institutions are to mean anything Mick, they have to be translated into concrete social action and jobs for us just the same as everybody else and I applaud them on that. I applaud the initiative of the Irish Government and I applaud Dr Paisley for coming along and welcoming us on that day because it is a great initiative and it is a small microcosm of what can be grown by co-operation and working together across this island, North and South and everybody can gain from it and nobody is threatened by it. That's the message that we have to get across to people and we have to breathe life into these institutions because if we don't do it as a trade union movement, the parties can't do it on their own. So we have to stimulate debate like this, stimulate activity like this and to move that whole situation forward. Thank you.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Seconder? And from here on in you are all definitely all on the clock.

Gareth Scott, Unite Section of Transport and General Workers Union

Gareth Scott, Unite Section of Transport & General Workers Union. I am here to second Motion 15. Colleagues, I was born in 1966. I grew up in the Troubles and I can tell you that Northern Ireland is a different place now than it was through those times. We have the prospect of lasting peace and I tell you that from working in the city, I work in Derry, that it is a different city to what it was in the 70s. But, we should not fool ourselves to think that because something looks better that that has cured all the ills of Northern Ireland, for it has not. The welcome that we have for the prospect of lasting peace and an Executive to bring accountable governance to Northern Ireland, but what we don't need is governance that continues on the errors of the past. Errors which had high unemployment, low economic development, lack of funding of public services and basically no funding for infrastructure. These are the problems that face Northern Ireland going forward and that is the challenge that is open to the Executive going forward.

I read a quote once that said: "Show me the greatest revolutionary the day after the revolution and I'll show you the greatest conservative". That cannot happen in Northern Ireland. What we need is an Executive that is going to deal with the errors of the past and to move Northern Ireland forward, and that is the challenge that is before this Executive. Now the structure of the Executive within Northern Ireland leaves itself in a situation because it's all inclusive which is to be welcomed but leaves it with no recognised opposition. There is a role for the trade union movement to work with the Executive to bring about the aims that we have – better social justice and economic development and funding for the public sector. But we must also make sure that we are a vehicle to ensure that we make the Executive accountable for the decisions they have will be making going forward.

And, on one specific note, I would say to Martin that in the next couple of weeks we will be meeting with the Minister for Agriculture who wishes to discuss the future of the Northern Ireland Agriculture Wages Board. A Board which was set up to determine the minimum standard of wages and conditions within Northern Ireland for workers in the agricultural industry, and industry that has considerable numbers of seasonal workers, the majority of which are migrant workers. And I call upon the Executive to make sure that one of their first decisions is not to do something which even Margaret Thatcher would have done in all her years in power, and that is to abolish a mechanism that is there to protect workers' rights. And, in fact not only that, we would say to the Executive we shouldn't be reviewing the mechanism we have in place to protect workers' rights. We in Northern Ireland should be looking at a way to strengthen mechanisms and introduce new

mechanisms to give workers greater rights within Northern Ireland. I second the Motion 15.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

I am now going to open Motions 14 and 15 for speakers and ask Craigavon Trades Council to be ready then to move Motion 16, sorry, is Craigavon there? I can't see beyond this fake piece of wood, my apologies to Craigavon, come up please and move Motion 16.

Dooley Harte Craigavon & District Council of Trade Unions

Thank you very much Vice President. Vice President, Conference, Dooley Harte on behalf of Craigavon & District Council of Trade Unions to move Motion No 16. Firstly, Conference our Trades Council would obviously echo the comments that have been made by the previous speakers with regards to the Peace Process and certainly the need for us to have local accountable politics and for us to influence it as a movement. Certainly one of the outcomes of the Peace Process over a period of time has been the provision of European money. Conference, there can be no doubt that the trade union movement has been proactively involved in the distribution of money flowing from the European Peace & Reconciliation initiative. However, this contribution has been difficult given the sometimes political shenanigans ongoing on district councils by our elected representatives on local strategy partnerships. However, our trade union representatives on those partnerships had sought to deliver an impartial service to communities and one the pillars of this delivery under both Peace 1 and Peace 2 has been that the trade union movement involves itself in both the local and central level and more importantly, that this movement nominated representatives to these bodies. We are now moving into Peace 3 programme. The first theme of this programme is set out as building positive relations at a local level. Our concern under Peace 3 is that local authorities are to become the lead partners in this process and certainly from the information we are receiving through our representative on the local strategy partnerships is that these partnerships at a local level will be lead and decided upon by the local authority. This movement believes in cooperation with all communities in striving for a new and prosperous society for everyone. We do, however, quite rightly guard our independence and we will not be controlled by others. Craigavon Trades Council is concerned that local authorities will select its own partners and that the independence of this movement may be lost. We would therefore demand that the trade union movement is afforded a full and independent role in its deliver of Peace 3 in both the local and central level. We also demand that this movement and it alone retains the right to nominate its representatives to the new partnership structures and that we are free from any control of local authorities. Please support the motion.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Seconder?

Marjorie Trimble, UNISON

Chair, delegates, Marjorie Trimble, Unison seconding Motion 16. I have been an ICTU nominated representative from the start of this whole thing. Firstly on the District Partnership under Peace 1 and at present LSP under Peace 3. I know some of the LSPs have been incorporated into Council, ours is still stand alone although I don't know how long for. But over the years we have found ourselves the only people in the room that are prepared to challenge a proposal or decision because we weren't consulted at council. The move to distribute the fund explicitly through special programme bodies and the Community Relations Council has the capacity to remove funding from many of the key programmes our members are currently engaged in the community and voluntary sector, and will distort distribution on the basis of objective needs. The current removal of funding across the community and voluntary sector and the sectarianisation of funding programmes by Government through a process which turns targeting social need on its head. It is having a direct and negative impact on the ground in the most disadvantaged Catholic and Protestant working class communities. The fears of the activist in the sector is that current Government policies are reinforcing habits of sectarianism and division and damaging those on the ground who are attempting to challenge it. It is imperative that ICTU keep control of who sits on these committees. I second the motion.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Thank you Marjorie. All the motions are now up for debate along with the Section 4 of the Executive Council Report.

Unidentified Speaker - UNISON

Vice President, Deputy First Minister, delegates, I didn't intend to speak this morning but I did feel it would be too good of an opportunity to miss and first off all I would like to say that 1966 was a great year for the trade union movement Gareth, you were born and I joined my first union. God, I feel old. But what I want to say is, with Pam and Patricia and all my colleagues from Unison, we were at the Assembly the day, the great day that the marriage happened and we were delighted. And I thought back all those forty years ago when I and my friends took to the streets in Derry and we were out looking for jobs and houses and rights for the people and I thought this is great, you know, we have achieved something after forty years. But I don't want another forty years to go by before my members, or our members, have the right. You are here Minister today and I want your Assembly to have for us a health service we are proud of, education that we are proud of, that the most vulnerable in our society are looked after, people with

learning difficulties, the elderly. I think we have had an opportunity, the opportunity is here and we must grab it by both hands. We in the trade union movement have been to the fore in all that has happened. I am a very happy person that the Assembly is going the way it is going but believe you and me, I want to tell you here this morning, I think this is what I want to say, we will be there, we will make sure that you look after and act upon the things that the trade unions are asking for. I think we as the Irish Congress, I think we as unions have an opportunity. We must unite, we must unite and fight and again I am saying thank you for the great marriage and I hope there is never a divorce but we are standing at the step today.

Patricia McKeown, UNISO & Vice President of Congress

He said he had signed a pre-nup! Next speaker please.

John Corey, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

John Corey, NIPSA speaking to the Northern Ireland section of the report, Can I say, Deputy First Minister, Martin MacGuinness, Martin, we welcome the fact and I think it's the first time certainly in my time, certainly in my memory, that a Minister of the Northern Ireland Administration has address a Congress Biennial Delegate Conference. And the way that we now are in Northern Ireland, I assume that this is Executive policy that you address Conference. But seriously, I think a message you should take back to your other half, and I don't mean Mrs MacGuinness, I mean Dr Paisley, I think the message you should take back – an important message – that he would have been equally welcomed at this Biennial Conference and we look forward, seriously, to him, God willing, being at the next Biennial Conference to address it.

I also welcome the statement that you and Dr Paisley made on 8 May, your first day in office, when you said and I quote: "There is a real opportunity to provide the excellent public services which we all expect, deserve and value". And what I want to say to you is that as a trade unionist and on behalf of trade unions representing civil and public services, we are not going to achieve excellent public services unless you treat civil and public servants fairly and decently, and that hasn't been happening. There are many times, many times in the last five years of direct rule and indeed in the long periods before that where we in the public service trade unions felt that we were the only voice defending public services in Northern Ireland. And, if I just take some examples, recent ones, we went through and still going through to some extent attacks on civil servants pay. We have had attacks on public servants' pensions, we have had attacks on public service jobs and for example, the biggest attack we are faced with in the public service today in Northern Ireland is the review of public administration as it currently stands. And I know this started with good intentions five or six or seven years ago, but the reality is that it has been turned into something completely different by direct rule ministers and I know that tomorrow in your Executive you will be starting consideration of the review of public administration. But, I think, and certainly on

behalf of my own union and Congress, we are asking the Executive to take a step back on the review of public administration and to actually halt that process until there is a serious examination on where it's going.

The other big attack that we have faced and are still facing, I just want to make these two points, the other big attack that we have faced and are still facing is PSI, PPP, privatisation and I think the message that has to go, the important message that has to go, and you have to take from us today. The first message is this – that the ideology that you can deliver public services through the private sector is wrong and I hope the action on public services that you are talking about is not to be provided through the private sector but by accountable public servants. And, the last point I want to make is this, Vice President. We are not looking for favours from the new Executive. God knows, I think we deserve favours. We are looking for fairness but I believe the job of ministers, the job of ministers should ought to be to defend public services and when you have you ever heard a minister ever defend public services. Public services, not only public services but defending public servants and I look forward to hearing Northern Ireland ministers defending the civil and public servants in Northern Ireland.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Ok, thank you John, next speaker. Now I am warning you.

Brian Campfield, Northern Ireland Public Servants Alliance

I apologise on his behalf so I do for running over. Vice President, Conference Brian Campfield, NIPSA. I want to draw your attention to the Northern Ireland section of the Biennial Report and the absence of any reference to the Congress involvement in the local Government pensions' dispute. Peter Bunting is still here, was threatened with arrest as he organised a march through the city centre of Belfast on 28 March last year, a march which didn't have the approval of either the police or the Parades Commission and that was a march in defence of local Government pensions. It was the biggest manifestation of voters unity probably ever in Northern Ireland with workers in the education, housing and local Government and other sectors and Translink taking strike action in the defence of their pensions provisions. And that manifestation was co-ordinated to a large extent by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and I think it is a bit remiss and somewhat disappointing that there was no reference to the Congress involvement in that particular dispute. If you are involved in something that you are doing, they should be claiming at least some credit for it. I make this point, Conference, that manifestation of workers' unity, the strike which happened on 28 March, mass demonstrations in Belfast and right throughout Northern Ireland. That's the type of activity that the trade union movement needs to engage in and certainly needs to bring to the attention of the new Executive because we can go up with all the arguments on the day and the private sector has a very, very strong lobby in Northern Ireland. Business has a very strong lobby and we need to ensure that

the strength that we have among our membership and among our activists is clear for all to see and if we need to resort to taking to the streets to advance the interests of our members and society in general in Northern Ireland then that's what we will have to do. And, I think that is an important message that we need to send to the Executive. That demonstration and that strike on 28 March was the biggest industrial action Northern Ireland has actually ever seen and I think it is a credit to all the trade unions in the public sector who were involved in that but also I think it's important to recognise the role that Congress played in that action.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Thank you Brian. Next speaker.

Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON

Thank you delegates. Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON supporting the motions and speaking to the section of the Northern Ireland report on equality of human rights. Under the Good Friday Agreement both Governments committed to bringing forward a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland and subsequently a Charter of Rights for the whole island. Since then, ICTU, my own union and others and hundred of groups representing thousands of people have put an enormous amount of work into the Bill of Rights process. We are working for a Bill that is as strong and inclusive as possible and has at its heart the protection of social and economic rights. These are key in tackling existing inequalities in our society and supporting the Peace Process. The initial consultation process generated huge enthusiasm, it also raised expectations. People from all communities began to take ownership and could imagine how a Bill of Rights would have a positive impact on the problems we all face in our everyday lives. However, that process stalled with the Human Rights Commission willing to achieve consensus around key principles. Most of importantly it was not firm enough in supporting strong social and economic rights despite this being the demand in the majority of organisations. Since then the trade union movement and our allies in the Equality & Human Rights Coalition have consistently lobbied Government in the establishment of a Round Table forum of politicians and civil society as a key step in reviving the stalled process. This forum was finally agreed in the St Andrew's Agreement and met for the first time at the end of 2006. It has now met four times. Progress is painfully slow. Some politicians want to build a party that will veto into the decision making process. However, we are all working on ways to move forward. We are under no illusions that gaining consensus on a Bill of Rights will be any easier this time. The difference is that we are all in the same room and a Government elected by the people of Northern Ireland is empowered. Ultimately responsibility for equality and human rights still lies with the Secretary of State and that may be a problem in the future. However, the trade union movement continues to demand the full inclusion of social and economic rights. We demand recognisable gains for the most disadvantaged in our society. We demand the promotion of equality for all.

I would ask all unions to support this process by lobbying their political parties in publicising the potential of a Bill of Rights for members. I would also ask you to continue to support the Human Rights Consortium, a group of over one hundred NGOs, trade unions and community groups working on this issue. Only with these fundamentals in place can we begin to reach agreement on the rights and values that we wish to see carried forward into our future. Thank you.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Delegates, I am taking this as the final speaker in this part of the debate.

Mary Ferris, UNISON

President, Delegates, Mary Ferris, UNISON speaking on the Northern Ireland report. Conference, in the past it was the practice of that the Irish Congress present the whole Northern Ireland Committee report to this Conference. I hope we will start doing that again. What we have here is a summary which shows good work but it also omits some of the very significant issues like Brian mentioned there wanting to talk about the pensions strike last year. It featured very heavily at the Northern Ireland Biennial Conference because so many of us were involved including Unison, NIPSA, T&G, GMB and SIPTU. It centred on the British Government decision to change the rules of local Government pension schemes. In the North it is estimated that at least 50,000 people, workers, and brought this issue on to the streets to stop the trains, close the schools and local councils and put the spotlight on the plight of the public service workers, particularly the low paid, of which I am one. These pensions are under threat. However, now that the Assembly has been restored we have an opportunity to do what our colleagues did in Scotland and secure a better deal, hope you are listening Martin. I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff of NIC-ICTU for their support and to congratulate all unions for taking part in difficult times and to put a marker down to our new Government. The majority of public sector workers in the North are not well paid. That's a myth. It applies only to those at the top. Our pensions, small as they are, are vital to us so the message is hands off.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Thank you. Conference, I now want to move to the votes. Before us is Motion 14 on the Peace Process. All those in favour please show. Against. Abstentions. That is carried unanimously.

Motion 15. All those in favour please show. Against. Abstentions. That is carried unanimously.

Motion 16. All those in favour please show. Against. Abstentions. That is carried unanimously.

Thank you delegates. Can I put Section 4, Northern Ireland in the NEC report to you for agreement. Is it agreed? Thank you. That concludes this section of the debate on Northern Ireland. We now have an opportunity, as John Corey has said, the first opportunity we have ever had, Minister to be addressed by a Northern Minister at the Biennial Delegate Conference of ICTU.

Minister, our last Conference two years ago in Belfast we were addressed by an incoming Secretary of State who professed to be a great friend of the trade union movement. We have not seen that friendship manifested in any concrete way during that term of office. We have done business in the trade union movement with you during our first section of devolution. We do think you are somebody we can do business with. We hope your whole Executive will do business with us. We await a meeting with you soon, with both Dr Paisley and yourself and the Irish Congress in the North and we very much look forward to that, but right now on behalf of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions we most look forward to hearing from you, Deputy First Minister, Martin MacGuinness.

Guest Speaker

Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, MP, MLA

Firstly, can I thank all of you for the very warm welcome and very warm reception since I came here this morning. I want to thank David Begg and the Congress for the invitation to come and I am really delighted that I am the first minister from an administration in the North to address the ICTU. And, just to say we do look forward, both Ian Paisley and myself, to meeting with Peter Bunting and his colleagues in the time ahead. We listen very carefully to what the trade unions have to say and I think we ignore it at our peril the many very important messages that we hear.

I am delighted to be here to address the Conference and it is exactly one hundred days today from the historic agreement of March 26th and that was a very exciting day for many people. Not for the media and not even for the general public prior to the meeting that took place between Sinn Fein and the DUP. I spend the previous weekend involved in intensive negotiations with Peter Robinson, Ian Paisley jnr and Nigel Dobbs, with my colleague Conor Murphy and Gerry Kelly, working out an arrangement of what would happen on Monday 26th. And, when we arrived at Parliament Buildings the world's press were there – there to report failure. And, of course, they were shocked. These people who think they know everything, on that day found out that they knew very little. So, we had just come from a meeting where we and our party were led by Gerry Adams and the DUP were led by Ian Paisley. It was a very useful meeting but

obviously pre-cooked and pre-arranged over the course of the previous couple of days, even down to the shape of the table and where people would sit. But one of the most important things that was said at that meeting was said by Ian Paisley when he said that, we in the DUP represent working class people. And he said obviously you in Sinn Fein represent working class people and I thought that was a very important thing for Ian Paisley to say against some insight into where he is coming from, particularly in terms of the whole process of Government and how we move forward to represent the interests of the only people who really matter, those people who work, work for a living and who are the bedrock of our society. So, obviously that was an insight into Ian Paisley and where he was coming from and of course we moved on from that to May 8th when myself and Ian Paisley effectively took over as Joint First Ministers of the new administration. I have no more power than Ian Paisley has in this arrangement and Ian Paisley has no more power than I have. In a situation like that you either clash on all sorts of issues or you seek solutions to move forward. And, it is in that latter mode that both of us clearly are. When I made my speech that day I made a reference to a woman called Molly Gallagher, who was one hundred years old and who I had met previously. She lives not too far from here in Ardra, Co Donegal and she had said to me in a phone call prior to May 8th that she was looking forward to seeing Ian Paisley and myself together. So I want to be able to tell her that here today seven hundred delegates of the ICTU wished her a happy one hundred and first birthday which is actually today. So happy birthday Molly.

One of the most often remarks that I get when I travel around the island of Ireland up until May 8th from a lot of people is, My God, you are far taller than you look on TV. I try to work out how they work out what size you are on TV. But, the most common remark that I get now when I travel around the island of Ireland since May 8th is, how are you getting on with Ian Paisley? And people walk away very satisfied and very pleased when I tell them that I have a very good and positive working relationship with Ian Paisley. For twenty-five years I didn't like Ian Paisley. After twenty-five years he probably liked me less. But I have been working with him every day almost since May 8th until now and I really do like working with the Ian Paisley that I know since May 8th. I believe that the institutions that we are part of will last. I was a Minister in the David Trimble led Executive and I never had a feeling as Minister of Education that I was part of an administration that would last. I always felt that David Trimble was looking over his shoulder at Ian Paisley and that the situation we were in was really something that wasn't going to last and that proved to be the case. I think I have a good sense for this process. I have known for the last two years that Ian Paisley was going to do a deal with Sinn Fein and I know that obviously that because I was involved in negotiations and I have a sense of where different parties are coming from. But I have known with certainty for the last two years, since the autumn of 2004, that Ian Paisley and the DUP would sign up for the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement which are power sharing and all-Ireland in nature. And I think that that is something that all of us need to be very happy and content about that

Ian Paisley and the DUP recognise the importance of all us and we move forward together.

So, I think many different things happened in the course of this journey. I presented certificates to women who done computer courses and they were forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years of age two weeks ago in the Cregan estate in Derry. It was also attached to a Drop In Centre for young people and at the end of my speech on the presentations, a group of young people came up to me and presented me with a framed certificate which said all sorts of nice things about me but, more importantly, they presented me with a framed certificate which said all sorts of nice things about Ian Paisley. This is the most nationalist, republican part of Northern Ireland that you could get. The following Monday I went to Stormont and as I do every day met with Ian Paisley and I said, I was given something to give you by a group of young people from the Cregan estate and there were two or three people with him. One of them said you are joking when they read what was on the certificate. I said I'm not joking. It was very sincerely given and I could see Ian Paisley looking at it and that was the end of it. We went away. We had other business to do and we met again in the afternoon. We did our business in the afternoon and at the end of all that he pulled me to the side and he said, would you tell those young people who sent that that I really appreciate what they done. And, that's just to give you an example of the type of journey that we as a people in the North of Ireland are on.

I was in the City Hotel three weeks ago in Derry and a woman came over and grabbed hold of me and hugged me and she said, I am a DUP supporter, I am Paisley woman from Coleraine but I think what you people have done is absolutely fantastic. That's only one or two examples but that's the type of encouragement I am getting, that Ian Paisley is getting. He told me yesterday that on is way back from the Somme that a mother approached him in Belfast City Airport and ran after him and shook his hand and he said he really appreciated it.

So, I believe these institutions are going to last. I have a great confidence about that and I think that is something that we should all take great satisfaction and because there is much work to do, as we clearly have heard in the course of the contributions made on the important motions you have just supported overwhelmingly.

So, throughout those one hundred days I think that Ian Paisley and I and the administration that we are part of have shown our determination to fulfil the pledges we made on that day and many of the aspirations I know all of you share. A society moving from division and disharmony to one which celebrates our diversity and is determined to provide a better future for all of our people, that's where we want to go. A society that is prepared to tackle head-on the evils of racism and sectarianism. I had cause to visit a woman called Patricia Finan yesterday in North Belfast, who's young son Niall on last Friday evening was

beaten with a golf club by sectarian bigots and was left very critically injured in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. So, I think in all of that Ian Paisley and I are united and he has made very profound and far-reaching and wise statements on the need to oppose racism and sectarianism and that gives me great encouragement indeed.

We need a society which cherishes the elderly, the vulnerable, workers, the young and all of our children equally which welcomes warmly those from other lands and cultures who wish to join us towards a future together. A society which remembers those throughout our community who have suffered and continue to suffer as a result of our difficult and painful past. And, we must look to the future to find the means to help all those people. So, in order to attain these goals we need the tools and as joint heads of the Executive, the First Minister and I are pledged to do all in our power to ensure that it makes a real difference to the lives of all of our people by harnessing our skills through a first rate education system, caring for our sick in the best health service we can provide and building our economy through encouraging investment and improving our infrastructure.

John Corey made a reference to civil servants. One of the most interesting and enriching experiences that I had in the course of my time in this Peace Process and in politics is whenever I was made Minister of Education because I regarded that as a vitally important department and it was one that was chosen with great care and diligence. And, based on remarks made by Abraham Lincoln hundreds of years previously when in the first speech he ever made, and in the first sentence of the first speech that he ever made, said education was the most important issue facing people of the United States. I still think it is the most important issue facing any country or any society. But, when I was made Minister for Education I was told I would have to go to the most unionist part of the North of Ireland – Rathgael House in Bangor. I was also told that I was going to the most unionist department of all of the departments in the North of Ireland. Well did get a pleasant surprise. I went out there. The Loyalists of that area had a reception committee; they put all their flags on the flagpoles around the roundabouts just to make me feel welcome. There were all sorts of flags – union flags, Scottish flags, Ulster flags, everything except the tri-colour of course. But, my experience with the civil servants in the Department of Education was a first class experience. I was working with people and I didn't care what denomination they were, I didn't care how they voted. What I cared about was whether or not they had the same goals and objectives as me, viz a viz, how we bring about the vital change in our education system that had to take place. And, I met people there who were as dedicated and committed as I was to the abolition of the 11+. I want to say that within the civil service in the North of Ireland it's packed with people who are supportive of this process as we are.

So, the progress that we have made to date needs to continue and it will only do so through partnership. That partnership needs not just to be between political parties but also between all elements of our society. You, as trade unionists,

have a major part to play as do employers and all those who will help build our infrastructure and our economy. And we also look to friends on these islands and beyond to provide the practical support that we need.

Last week I was very honoured to lead with Peter Robinson a delegation of ministers, and I know some people who are small minded had a cheap shot at the fact that seven ministers from the Executive went to the United States of America but they missed the point completely. Every time the DUP, the SDLP, the Ulster Unionists or Sinn Fein went to the United States previously we always went on our own, with our own message. This time we were leading a united Government to the United States made up of Sinn Fein, the DUP, the SDLP and the Ulster Unionists, and I can tell you that it made a major impact on Capital Hill, with Congress people, with Senators, at the State Department, with corporate America, with Irish America. They just could not believe that Peter Robinson and I were singing from the same hymn sheet in terms of where we wanted to go with the Government. And, that was the reason we thought it was important that we went there. So, I think that it is quite clear that the seeds that we have sown there will reap a rich harvest. Now partnership will also come with our links with all parts of this island and working together with the Government, I just had a few words with the Taoiseach on the way in, we have to work on a range of issues which benefits our people. This is a very a small island of some five million people and the North South Ministerial Council element of the Good Friday Agreement is a vital Governmental institution which, hopefully, will meet before the end of July. The award by the Irish Government of some one billion euro for projects to do with road infrastructure, education and health is something that we applaud, we congratulate the Irish Government. We recognise the contribution they have made and of course the road through from Dublin to Monaghan and Monaghan through to Derry and to Letterkenny in Co Donegal is vital infrastructural projects which will greatly enhance everything that we are trying to do.

So, since March 26th much work has been done and I think much of that work has confounded the critics and astounded the sceptics. Indeed, many people told us even during the course of the election campaign that this could not be done, that the DUP and Sinn Fein wouldn't do a deal and that even if they did they wouldn't be able to work together. And we know that it won't be easy and that the road that we are embarking on will have many twists and turns but we have embarked on the road however by the will of the people. People like yourselves, trade unionists, who voted for the four parties who now make up the new administration in the North and who have voted for a wholly new political era which is based on peace, equality and reconciliation. And, with your help and yours I hope our first one hundred days that will only be the start of the new dispensation that will provide a better future for all of us. So, I think these are exciting times. These are very interesting times and I think there is undoubtedly an awful lot of work to do. I see the trade union movement as playing a vital role in all of that, and Ian Paisley and I as I have said, are very committed to meeting

with the trade union movement and hope to meet with Peter and others during the course of the next short while, because there are difficult decisions to be taken as we move forward. And, I think we are up for all of that. I think we are up for all of the challenges that that represents. As I say, this is a very small island and we have to work together North and South, East, West, Catholic, Protestant, the centre, Unionists, Loyalists, Nationalists, Republicans and I think we are getting there. I think we have made an absolutely mighty leap forward in the course of the past couple of months and I look forward to more mighty leaps forward as we move forward to bring about a better future for everybody who lives in this island.

So, tá áthas mór orm a bheith anseo libh inniu. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Conference, I call on our General Secretary to respond.

David Begg, General Secretary, Congress

Deputy First Minister, I think you will have detected from the warmth of the response that people very much appreciated your coming here today and not alone just coming but I think participating so fully in the debate on Northern Ireland and hearing what the delegates had to say at first hand. I think there is a huge fund of goodwill for you and for your administration and I think, if I may say so, probably a lot of people in this hall who might not have agreed with you politically over the years who would certainly have recognised and admired your personal courage and the leadership you have shown in bringing about the peace settlement on this island.

Just mention in passing that some of my colleagues on the Congress Executive even dressed for the occasion – you can see Green, White and Gold at the edge of the platform down there. I felt that was going too far myself but there you are.

Anyway, just I mean you have heard what the delegates have had to say. I think we have had a very comprehensive debate. There is huge concern clearly about the position of the public services in Northern Ireland and I mean all I would say about that myself that I spent a period of time in different parts of the world and I noticed that over the nineties, you know you had this whole drift of policy from the International Monetary Fund and people like that who sought to reduce the size of Government and they found in many countries that this in fact turned out to be an absolute and complete failure. And, in fact, what we need to do is to recognise that having a strong institutional framework is actually a positive advantage and if, you know, in the Southern part of this island if you look to the example, one of the things that was most helpful in achieving the economic progress here that was made was the ability of the public service here to deliver effective results from the cohesion funding that was available from Europe. So, I think that is a strong

advantage to have and at times you hear genuinely well intentioned people speaking about the need in Northern Ireland to reduce the size of the public sector is actually a mis-directed ideological orientation and of course we would all agree that encouraging foreign direct investment in to the province and you know, increasing general private sector economic activity and larger scale industries is something which is needed. You need to see the public sector as a means of achieving that, not something to be removed as an obstacle. And, the last thing I will say about it – I appreciate you come across very good colleagues in the administration and so on, but there is a particular affliction which sometimes hits very senior civil service and that is the belief that to be respectable they themselves must become authors of a change to kind of private ideology. Its escapes me why this is so. It doesn't affect all I have to say but occasionally you see it so my only advice would be to be aware of that particular thing.

I think that the other point maybe to make to you is this. I noted particularly recently very good dialogue being established with the Scottish Devolved Government and your own and I think this is something which has great potential in terms of re-orientating politics in these islands. I can only say to you that we ourselves in Congress have been able to do that over a number of years. We enjoy the closest co-operation with the TUC in Britain and the Scottish TUC and the Welsh TUC and it has been a most productive experience for us all. And, I think really in the new dispensation, now I often think in the trade union side there is a relationship of the Nordic countries trade union structure for instance which is very positive. Something that we might actually borrow from in the future.

If politics follows it's normal course by the way after the one hundred days are finished, in the course of time people will start blaming you for this, that and the other, and I can tell you from having a limited knowledge of operating a partnership structure, that everything will be blamed on this partnership between yourself and Ian Paisley in due course. But, I think you must endure and I think you made a very important point when you said that no matter what structures you have, very often the dynamics of making any organisation work lies in the relationship between the peoples there. I think none of us in the euphoria of what has been achieved and what a great thing it is in our lifetime to see it achieved, that Northern Ireland is still a very polarised community. We had Paul Oaks down here yesterday from the Equality Commission at a fringe meeting and he was making the point that while the good progress had actually been made in the workplace in the relationship between peoples, that Northern Ireland is still a very polarised society. So, there is a huge challenge for you. We wish you well and I suppose you can encapsulate it this way saying, my greatest hope for you would be that in the course of time that you would consign to history Churchill's remarks about the 'dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone'. They would have no more relevance. Thank you.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Conference, just before the Minister leaves us. From the historical to the practical, the bus for Sligo for the LIFT participants is outside. Voting cards can still be exchanged in the Congress Office but only for a short period. The authors of the Social Partnership book are signing it until 1.30pm. The missing keys and mobile phone that someone is panicking about are up here. And, the fringe meeting on Skills and Lifelong Learning which Paul Sweeney is leading is starting here at 1.00pm here in this room.

Now, I would ask you Congress to allow the Minister and his team to be able to leave the room. We have come to the end of business. We talked to Standing Orders about the business that has not yet been reached but at this stage Congress stands adjourned until 2.30pm this afternoon. Tomorrow morning – sure it's the half day.

Liam Berney, Industrial Officer, Congress

Colleague, colleagues, could those people who have been appointed Scrutinisers, could they stay in the room for a short meeting please.

Conference adjourned until 9.30am Thursday morning.

Thursday 5 July Morning Session

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I ask delegates who are standing to please take their seats as I want to get the conference underway? Thanks very much.

Obviously it has been necessary because of the amount slippage, particularly yesterday, to ask the Standing Orders Committee to have look at the outstanding business particularly today's business. Delegates, can I please ask you to take seats. So I am going to call on Michael to give us a Standing Orders Report on how we should proceed from here.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders

Thank you President. Michael Sharp Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee giving Standing Orders Report No 5.

We are very concerned delegates at the considerable slippage which has meant that some very significant and important motions which we know you came prepared to move and debate have been lost off the agenda and we want to see what we can do about that. However, we have a very full programme this morning so in an effort at least not to have any more slippage we are proposing that speaking times be reduced to three minutes to movers of motions and two minutes to seconders of motions. We have also asked the President to be absolutely stringent on those times and to simply knock people out or knock the microphone off if people are going well over their time. We have also asked the General Secretary, who is opening the debate the economy to keep his contribution to a maximum of ten minutes given that we have had quite a bit of discussion on economic matters already over the past two days. Standing Orders will then review the position at lunchtime. Hopefully with these restrictions we will get through everything that is scheduled this morning, we will then review the position at lunchtime and try to find a way of getting some things back on the agenda. In that context you will notice that there is actually an omission in your agenda that the Question & Answer session on health matters is scheduled for an hour and a half – 2.30 – 4.00pm but in fact there is then meant to be from 4.00 – 5.30pm there are a lot of motions scheduled. So we will review the position at lunchtime, we will see how possibly we can pick up some time in the afternoon. I would also advise you that ballot papers for the elections that have to take place can now be collected from the Scrutineers/Standing Orders Office which on the second floor. In other words if you go down the main corridor of the hotel you will see eventually on the left hand side the ICTU office. There is a staircase opposite that and if you go up that to the second floor you can get your ballot papers during the course of the morning.

That is Standing Orders Committee Report No 5 so again, three minutes and two minutes and please cooperate with the President and with Conference, otherwise we have no hope of not only getting back to things we have lost but we will get into more trouble. So please cooperate. I move, thank you.

Peter McLoone, President of Congress

Delegates can I put Standing Orders Report No 5 to Conference. All those agree? Ok.

Ok, so we will proceed to deal with the order of business for today which is the economy and the public services and I am going to invite the General Secretary to talk to section 5 and to open the debate. Delegates can I please ask that if you want to talk and have conversations that you go outside. Ok, David please.

David Begg, General Secretary, Congress

Thanks very much indeed President. Actually colleagues if you have a look at some stage at Section 5 of the Report, I think it does give a very comprehensive overview of the health of our economy. It was written by Paul and he has put an awful lot of very useful data into that. As the Chairperson of Standing Orders said, time is limited. I had intended going through a somewhat more lengthy presentation where I had hoped to sort of talk about first of all the global economy, then the domestic economy to look at some of the potential risks to see whether all this argument about cold chill winds is justified or not, and to identify some issues of concerns specifically to workers. But I'll shorten that on the hoof if I can.

Just looking at international conditions one very interesting thing has happened in the recent past. We have been told for a long period of time that Europe you know was in a very bad state lagging behind the United States. It was all due to all these problems and not having flexible labour markets and so on, but actually Europe has begun to develop a faster rate than the United States. So we are in a much better position and in fact the international conditions generally are extremely good at the moment because of the recovery of Europe and indeed because of the recovery of Japan as well. I mean, in terms of the domestic economy, we spoke at some length yesterday and I won't repeat it again, about the importance now of trying to approach the question of economic development on an All Island perspective. This is enshrined in *Towards 2016*, in the NESC report and in the NDP. I think too that we mentioned yesterday the fear of this chill wind is probably overblown for a variety of reasons. In terms of our own domestic growth situation that chart there shows you the pattern of it. Really what will happen is that 2006, I think, has already had a growth rate established of 6 per cent. The forecast generally accepted for 2007 is five per cent, although for the first quarter it has been growing at 7.5 per cent so it may actually be

higher at the end of the year and then for 2008 people are talking about variously 4.6 and 4 per cent. So that is extremely good overall performance even if it is moderating somewhat next year. In the last day you will have seen the public finances being reported on as being in deficit to the tune of 1.5 billion euros for the first six months of this year as against a sort of a surplus last year. I mean these things never end out exactly as they are in the media, so at the end of the year it will probably be a better position overall. The Government has a very active programme of public expenditure this year of 13 per cent. Next year the Programme for Government is talking about a reduction of 7.5 per cent, so we may find some difficulty for ourselves in the public services in dealing with that. That slide deals with the composition of the labour force – I don't need to go through that. I'll just mention on inflation. You can see there the difference between HICP and CPI. CPI is how we measure inflation. Here the HICP is what's called the harmonised index. Basically what it means is inflation minus the interest rates. That's the difference here. And because in Ireland we are such a heavily indebted country we have a very large amount of the consumer price index is associated with the increase in interest rates and you can see there towards the end of '06 how the CPI and harmonised index began to diverge. Frankly speaking, as you know the CPI is around 5 per cent at the moment. If you took out the element of it dealing with house prices you would be down to 2.7 per cent. It would still be higher than the European average which is 1.9 per cent.

You needn't bother with that – that's industrial production – just to say that industrial production in Ireland is actually up in the first quarter of this year to 13 per cent which again is a big recovery in that part of the exporting economy.

The risks in the future are simply this – we have a very big construction section in Ireland. It is very important that the current somewhat projected decrease in house building is taken up by an increase in the employment of people in the hard physical infrastructure to the best extent possible and we get a kind of a soft landing there.

There has been some loss of competitiveness in the economy. I mean in one sense obviously we are trying to push up wages but it is important to say that competitiveness is only very partially dependent on wages. There is a big debate about that at the moment. It is always put across that it has to do with costs and all that type of stuff but actually it is a much bigger question than that.

As an open economy like us we are very vulnerable to shocks. What kind of shocks could we be talking about. We could be talking about serious problems with the American economy because of its current account deficit and the possible collapse of the dollar if anything went pear shaped on that and basically oil prices, you know, consequent on security problems in the world.

The oil prices – that graph just shows they are in around - the way they have gone they are running around 72 dollars a barrel – they are on a sort of an upward trend again which is a slightly worrying thing – not huge but nevertheless slightly worrying.

Don't bother with that – that's the American deficit.

Issues of particular concern to workers – well obviously employment quite honestly is the first thing. Even though we have close to full employment here, it is still worrying. Inflation and the impact on earnings we have been talking about publically. Indebtedness because so many people have mortgages and housing affordability related to that.

Just on employment – one thing to say. If you look at that graph there, the mauve line shows you the rate of job creation in the economy and the yellow one the rate of jobs destruction and the green of course is the net. The interesting thing about the Irish economy is that, like generally speaking we have been creating new jobs at the rate of one in ten new jobs, around 10 per cent, we have been losing jobs at rate of one in twelve. There is this kind of destruction, some people would call it a kind of creative destruction, going on in the economy all the time and always has been even when we were in the height of the Celtic Tiger. And one of the things at present is that you see factories closing down but you see at the same time new jobs coming in via the IDA investment pipeline. And investment in the country is over 9 billion last year. It is the highest it has been I think since 2000. Very strong inward investment into the country so you have that kind of difficulty for workers in practice of jobs being lost in some industries and created in others and how we handle that in the future is a key challenge and we have been talking, you may have heard us talking publically about the concepts of flexicurity as a possible solution to that.

Earnings I have just given to you there generally. I won't go through them – just see what they are in the different sectors for 2006. The only one that is in for 2007 yet for quarter 1 is the construction running at 6.3 per cent, and I have given the figures for inflation there and the official projections for 2008 which, frankly, I think are somewhat understated.

One big problem for us is that we have a huge stock of mortgage debt and it is something we have been, the Taoiseach referred to it yesterday in the discussions we have had with him, this concern about the fact that every time the ECB puts 25 basis points on a mortgage repayment, it adds 35 euro to the monthly repayment of a €250,000 mortgage. And that is a huge problem for us disproportionately because credit, mortgage credit, has been growing at a phenomenal rate of over 30 per cent. It is down to about 15 per cent this year because of the cutback but 30 per cent, generally speaking. Now one point I would say to you which is particularly a difficulty – the shaded area in maroon there is the variable mortgage and the yellow one fixed. A very small proportion

of our people have fixed mortgages so they get hit for the fully whack of the interest rate that comes from the ECB. They are not hedged against that by having fixed mortgages. That is an interesting thing there.

In terms of mortgage affordability – those figures there show you what it is in Dublin and nationally in terms of repayment as a percentage of a person's net income and it running there, you know, around 25 per cent. You will probably notice that between January, between December and January last that the percentage went down there. You will see in the case of the Dublin index in the bottom there, from 32 to 29 and nationally from 26.4 to 24.4. The reason for that was there were increases in the mortgage interest rate in the budget which eased the position of affordability at that time. Effectively what they did was they knocked two of the ECB rises off. They neutralised two of them right. The problem is that we have eight of them since it started. And, that is what we are arguing with the Government about at the moment. They need to do an awful lot more in that to sort of help people with mortgages, because if you look at the mortgage situation nationally, about 50 per cent of people don't have mortgages as a problem, they paid off their mortgage or whatever, 25 per cent of people can, kind of generally speaking, manage it without too much difficulty, but 25 per cent are in real trouble and there are the people we have to try and help because they are being hit most by this inflation figure.

Just the very last slide you will be glad to hear, just a quote there that is worth there that is worth looking because it was written by Martin Wolfe who is correspondent with the *Financial Times* and the *Financial Times* is the business paper of the world I suppose, the most liberal paper, a strong believer in capitalism and so on, and Martin Wolfe was making the point that we are going through phenomenal change in the world. That capitalism as we know it is changing fundamentally. It is mutating towards a much harder, rawer version than we have had, and he wrote an article on the 19 June which is very well worthwhile looking at. It is chilling in its own way but it tells the problems we are facing socially and politically as a result of this and that quote there, what he said, I'm not sure if you can read it, but what he said *"Last but not least are the challenges to politics itself arising from this. Across the globe there has been a sizeable shift in incomes from labour to capital. Newly incentivised managers, free from inhibitions feel entitled to earn vast multiples of their employees' wages. Financial speculators earn billions of dollars not over a lifetime but in a single year. Such outcomes raise political questions in most societies. Our brave new capitalist world has many similarities to that of the early 1900s but in many ways it has gone far beyond it"*. It is a sobering thought and we all know Marx's comment about history, but in 1900s, between 1870 and 1914 we had the last great period of globalisation. It all collapsed in chaos and war in 1914. I hope that never happens again of course but thinking that there is stability in this kind of mad system that we have to deal with at the moment is very foolish and if the High Priests of capitalism itself are recognising it, it is time for everybody to pay attention to it. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, can we now move to the motions and can I invite Jack O'Connor to move Motion 32 on behalf of the Executive Council.

Jack O'Connor, President of Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

President, delegates, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU Motion 32. Delegates, I think that we can all agree that yesterday was a very memorable day here and I think it was hard to escape the feeling on leaving this hall, that we were witnessing the dawning of a new Eire and one which offered the possibility of the realisation for all the people on this island of the prospect of living a full free and happy life. And, I think this is especially so when we add to that the experience of the economy in the South – fifteen consecutive years of record economic growth. The lowest dependence rate in Europe as well as the highest rate of population increase and added to this, the obvious peace dividend.

But, there are limitations as we all know on economic growth which is based exclusively on the combination of consumer spending on the one hand and construction inflation on the other. All of this is credit led and there are indications now, as we all know, that it is all beginning to evaporate. So the question that presents to planners and policy makers is as to what kind of economic model to select to sustain the potential to realise, to optimise the potential of the situation in which we find ourselves in the medium and longer term. And the motion before you this morning, delegates, highlights the inter-dependence of the economic and the social as distinct from the one before the other approach which is so favoured by neo-liberal economists and spokespersons for some of the employer's organisations. This, I think, the superiority of the inter-dependence approach is graphically highlighted in relation to the issue of inflation which threatens, as we all know, to undermine the prospects for the future in the economy of the Republic. This is entirely attributable to the failure to pursue progressive policies over the last ten years because the principal component of inflation is interest rates itself, not so much the interest rates as the contract, the mortgage contracts which people have been obliged to enter into as has been pointed out by the General Secretary, by reason of the failure on the one hand to regulate the price of building land which would have entailed confronting speculators, and on the other the failure, which compounds the problem, to invest adequately in social or affordable housing. Any analysis of the record on experience of small economies not dissimilar from our own over the past twenty or more years confirms absolutely the superiority of the social market approach, especially as it's applied in the Nordic countries. These countries repeatedly, year after year delegates, appear at the top or near the top of all the international leagues on competitiveness and economic growth. And, interestingly enough if you look at the figures for their economies their GDP

per capita correspondence quite closely with the other measure of development – Gross National Income which has a social dimension. But in Ireland that isn't the case. We are ranked as 4th by the OECD for GDP but only 15th in the ranking of GNI. And it is interesting to see that despite high levels of public expenditure, it's not just to spite but actually through high levels of public expenditure they are able to surpass most of the neo-liberal type economies in relation to the issue of productivity, and incidentally, maintain high levels of trade union density as well. But their public investment in education, research and development and in social provision far surpasses our own. For example, delegates, in a 2003 ranking for the proportion of GDP spent on education, the UK ranked 13th, the Republic of Ireland ranked 21st, Denmark was 1st, and Sweden was 2nd. And if you apply that to the particular in that particular survey the expenditure in Sweden per individual, per student, ran at 40 per cent in excess of that which applied in the Republic of Ireland. And looking at the question of Research & Development as well, in an OECD survey in 2005 Sweden was applying as a proportion of GDP exactly three times we were applying in the Republic of Ireland – 3.9 per cent of GDP as against 1.3 per cent in the Republic on Research & Development – the key to the future.

Of course the question delegates, is as to whether or not we can afford it. Well last year in the Republic the Minister for Finance had a surplus of nine billion euro on current income over current expenditure. And, despite the somewhat more downbeat projections of the last two months, all the indications are that they will come in pretty close to the seven billion euro surplus which was predicted for this year. So it is not a question delegates as to whether we can afford it. It's a question as to whether we afford not to pursue a public policy which underpins and sustains economic development and social development over the medium to longer term. Because, delegates, the fact of the matter is that equality is not just morally desirable, it's economically superior as well. I move the motion. Thank you very much delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much Jack. Can I now call on Amicus to move Motion 33 please? Jerry. Your three minutes have started Jerry, that's your problem. Have we a formal seconder for Motion 32. Yes, ok.

Jerry Shanahan, Amicus

Now start the clock! Jerry Shanahan, Amicus, Section Unite. That's easier to say than Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union Section, if you like. Well it is unite moving Motion 33, which in a lot of ways is self explanatory.

Colleagues, during the course of the discussions on the Good Friday Agreement, Tony Blair talked about the hand of history being on people's shoulders. Yesterday, the Taoiseach talked about a guiding hand in everything we did,

everything we said, everything we thought in relation to the economy that we should do that in the context of an All Island economy. And, we have been doing that. Congress has been doing that. But not with I think the pace and with the necessary resources provided by Government to inject the urgency into the situation. The Deputy First Minister made the point of securing the peace in Northern Ireland. It has to be secured with a dual strategy not just the political moving forward but also economic development. There has not been the type of economic development in Northern Ireland that we have had in this part of the country over the last twenty years. Northern Ireland has to be brought up to speed even to a standing start to get it to the point where it can develop to the pace that it has developed in the Republic.

We have identified particular areas; energy for example. There will be a single electricity market from the autumn of this year. In other words there will be an All Island electricity market. Will it bring prices down? If they continue with the current regulation policy the answer is No Could it bring prices down? The answer is yes. Why do I say that? Quiet simply, because it is the interference of the Regulator that has pushed ESB prices up by 67 per cent over the last number of years in pursuit of competition in the electricity market. There is only one provider of electricity in Northern Ireland yet nobody talks about monopolies. When we go into the single electricity market in the autumn the ESB will have 27 per cent of the market so can we stop talking about cutting back and cutting back in the ESB, it is cut back far enough. That's what I will say on that topic.

In relation to industrial policy and here I want to make a point and it is a simple point, but an important one. Ten miles from here or less when you cross over the border into Fermanagh, probably less than ten miles, you have the right to trade union recognition. You have the right to representation and collective bargaining yet in this town you don't. If we talk about an All Island economy we have to talk about equality of rights, the representation, trade union bargaining and to trade union rights. Just to finish, one simple point Chairman. Corporation tax – there has to be different treatment in Northern Ireland in relation to corporation tax to redress the economic imbalance that is there. It is different to every other part of the UK. It has to be treated differently. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much. Could I have a formal seconder to Motion 33 please? Agreed. And Jerry you are now speaking on Motion 34. Can I ask you to move that on Energy and Climate Change?

Jerry Shanahan, Amicus

Colleagues, I have been asked on behalf of the Executive Council to move the Executive Council motion on Energy and Climate Change. Again, it is a topic that I would prefer we had a lot more time to discuss but what I need to focus in on

very quickly is the whole argument in relation to climate change, carbon emissions, and in particular how oil, fossil fuels in general contribute to carbon emissions and to the situation where we are now sitting aside something in the order of 270 million in the Republic for carbon credits because we have exceeded our carbon emissions under the Kyoto Protocol. In any consideration of an energy policy you have to examine where your fuel mix is coming from. There has to be a move away from fossil fuels, not only because the cost of fossil fuels but because of the damage to the environment caused by oil in particular. Wind obviously is less carbon emitting. Hydro is less carbon emitting and dare I say it nuclear is less, is the lowest in actual fact it is the greenest form of energy.

Now we have called for a national debate on the whole question of energy policy and we have said that in that debate and in considering the fuel mix that we require within the island at this point in time you cannot exclude nuclear from that debate. Let's have the debate. If at the end of it you want to exclude nuclear fair enough but don't start the debate by saying that it is not on the agenda, I don't think that is reasonable, particularly when it's considered to be a green fuel.

I have already mentioned the preoccupation with competition in the context of the previous motion. Again if we are to talk about having 30 per cent as the White Paper says of our energy generation needs from renewables, then the current policy on wind will not be a satisfactory one unless storage facilities are developed in tandem with wind. Wind, if it doesn't blow, produces no energy. If there is too much wind they have to switch off the turbines for the simple reason that they can't function when there is too much wind above a certain wind speed.

There has not been investment in wave although there is some money set aside for it. There is a whole industry could be created in this country and in the process reduce carbon emissions because if we are setting aside 270 million for carbon provisions, imagine what that type of money would do if it was invested in research and development into renewables such as wind, such as wave and other forms of energy generation.

So, colleagues, I would ask you to support our motion. We produced a document in early spring of this year as an alternative strategy from the Executive Council of Congress and in fairness all possible means of generating energy should be included in the debate. I move the motion. Thank you President.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Just before you leave, Jerry, are you moving Motion 35 on behalf of Amicus as well? Ok, that's alright. Could I have a formal seconder to 34? Two trick man indeed. After I take Motion 35, I am now going to take speakers on the four motions. Can I move 35? Michael you want to come in.

Michael Sharp, Amicus Unite

Michael Sharp, Amicus Unite, seeing can I practice what I preach in moving Motion 35. Delegates, the President in his excellent speech on Tuesday referred to the maximum – the rising tide lifts all boats and said, and I agree with him, that that is not factual. It is not what really happens. But what does happen is that a rising tide when you are not in a boat you drown and that is what could happen and will happen if we do nothing about climate change. We have seen what happens in this country when relatively small scale inclement weather factors cause flooding. The damaging effects of that causes to people's houses, to peoples work places, to their lives and their livelihoods. That repeated on a world wide massive scale would mean that what we have seen to date in this country is only in the halfpenny place. So we have to do something about it. And, it is not just about water. We have seen what happens when temperature changes affect fish stocks and that will go on, will get worse. There will be scientists tell us that certain animal plant varieties will be effected, you will affect the food chain, the food industry, the agricultural industry. It is necessary to address these issues now. And there are many reports. There is now a general consensus that something needs to be done, that we just can't allow things to proceed as they have done for the last fifty or a hundred years or whatever. There is a general consensus that we need to set specific targets and try to move to them but in our view in Amicus based on talking to our members who work in industries that have an affect on these things are that the long term targets are fines and should be worked to but in many respects they can be very easy to resile from or to fudge as time goes and what is needed therefore is a specific year to year target that is referred to in the Stern report, one of the reports I have mentioned. That's what we refer to in this motion, that what we feel there should be is an annual carbon budget of a 3 per cent reduction year on year so that we can see exactly where we are getting to and not just talking about reaching something in 2020 or 2030 or whatever. We need it year on year. That's what the motion specifically refers to. That is what we should commit ourselves to and I move the motion. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Can I have that motion formally seconded? Yes. Now I am going to take speakers, Michael, sorry Ann you are blocked there from my view.

Ann Speed, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

Desperately trying to cut down the speech and I don't know if I am going to be able to make it in two minutes but I wanted to on behalf of my union, SIPTU, strongly associate our union with the call in Motion 33 for an ICTU led campaign for an All Ireland economic strategy. Yesterday we reaffirmed our commitment to a peace process which would leave no citizen out and we applauded Bertie Aherne when he promised full and deep consultation on the spending the peace

dividend. And we believe that this motion is about preparing for, influencing and leading that consultation, creating public awareness and securing key commitments. While business efficiency and successful long term economic strategies are important for any Government, it is the quality of life for ordinary people which is the key factor for us as trade unionists, whether it is Derry, Dublin, Limavaddy or Listowel. And we do believe that the motion gets the balance right between two objectives and we, for example, we are mindful of the reality of economic life in Ireland today. We have 5.7 million on the island, 2.8 million are workers, over a million of our people are declared to be living in poverty and 1.1 million are without any formal education and these are the key issues that we have to address in terms of all island economic development. Now all of our citizens are coming under major pressure from external factors – global competitiveness and the strategies of right wing economic pundits. So we have big problems North and South. We have inequality, economic underdevelopment, the lack of an effective enterprise strategy and we do have a need for the kind of economic policies which will create jobs, nurture families and strengthen and revitalise our communities across the whole of the island.

So under the two programmes that we are going to have to engage with, Government programmes for economic development, the National Development Plan in the South and the investment strategy for Northern Ireland, there will be a combined spend of 100 billion. We are in an unique position as a trade union movement – an All Ireland movement, the biggest civic organisation on the island of Ireland to create strategies which plan for the island's infrastructural development and it is vital that we play our role, we take the leadership, we take up the challenge and I commend Amicus for putting the motion to the Conference and as I said we strongly associate ourselves with that and we look forward to the challenge and the campaign for this strategy. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you. Are there any other speakers?

Carmel Gates, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Carmel Gates, NIPSA to speak on Motion 32 and to oppose Motion 32. It is the view of NIPSA that this motion is very confused and doesn't really lay out clearly what policy objectives we should be setting ourselves for the coming years. The motion talks at the beginning about a window of 7 to 8 years to take action to achieve the objectives of prosperity and a decent society. It is not quite clear other than a suggestion that we follow the Nordic model as to how we would achieve that. Now the question I want to raise is do we really want to be following the Nordic model, which rather than social cohesion and decency in society is actually reversing now all the achievements that workers have made over the last fifty years. On the May demonstrations in Sweden this year, the most popular slogan was "Put the Government in the Garbage Department".

There they are facing the same neo-liberal agenda that we face, the same attacks on public services, moves towards privatisation, cuts in welfare, cuts in unemployment benefit, cuts in wealth and property taxes. So they are creating a situation where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. We have seen strikes, we have had some strikes across that country, most particularly by the miners who work for one of the most profitable companies in the world and yet are seeing themselves with no share in that wealth. Again, in Norway, despite the enormous oil wealth that country has, instead of using it to the benefit of their people they are investing overseas and again cutting health and welfare in that country and again not even pretending anymore to defend the living standards of ordinary working people.

In Denmark we have also seen that they have been racked by strikes and despite again their economic growth, there is no investment in public services. There are cuts in welfare, cuts in Council budgets and they are facing the same attacks. So, in all honesty, I would ask, I mean what this motion is trying to say, I mean to say the first bit of it is very confused. The suggestion about following the Nordic model isn't we believe the right signals that we sent out either to our own members, to workers in general but also in particular, to the Government. I don't want the Government to believe that we agree that the neo-liberal agenda of the Nordic countries is the model we want to see. I think it sends the wrong signals. So instead of aligning ourselves with the economic and social cohesion that no longer exists we should be aligning ourselves with those workers in the Nordic countries who are resisting the attacks on living standards and we should be aligning ourselves with them in solidarity and telling them that rather than emulate the economic policies of the neo-liberal Government, we want to emulate their resistance to the cuts and the tax they have faced over the last number of years. So oppose the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks. Are there any other speakers please?

Lorraine Mulligan, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

Lorraine Mulligan, speaking for SIPTU on Motion 35. We welcome this motion and the debate that it provokes. There is a deficit in the union on knowledge by climate change and we need to get our heads around it if we are going to shape progressive policy on this issue. I am going to outline the context, the strategy, and the prospective that we need to consider. Under Kyoto, Ireland has to reduce omissions to 13 per cent above 1990 levels. We have to go further if we are going to meet international commitments up to 2020 and beyond, then as low as 14 per cent under 1990 levels. Currently, we are only at 24 per cent above 1990 levels. We have huge work to do. Now the new programme from Government makes clear that if new social partnership talks take place there will be environmental considerations explicitly in there so unions are going to have to

negotiate on this issue. We have to engage at negotiation level and particularly in relation to the motion. The Government has committed to 64 per cent reductions in greenhouse gas omissions. The question for unions is whether we support that being a legally binding commitment as has been advocated by the groups like "Friends of the Earth" and the Labour Party or do we want to allow for flexibility.

Another possibility is the introduction of a carbon tax. Now this is going to have distributional effects on our members on low income groups, in particular, who have high energy requirements. We are going to have to get to grips with how to ensure that there is alleviating measures to stop fuel poverty and to help the vulnerable groups.

Now, if Irish people are going to have any chance at changing their behaviours we need to ensure that we have an infrastructure, a social infrastructure and transport links to prevent us from having to use our cars constantly. You know, that is a major factor that hasn't been addressed. The other issue is that under the 2016 partnership agreement, the Government is putting away 270 million on the trading scheme. That trading scheme, though that money could be used for fuel efficiency measures in homes and various other things, so we need to see how well that works. The permits aren't even, there is no price on them, and they are giving away to companies so we do to address how the system is set up. We also need to balance the need for protecting employment and growth and our jobs as well as the need for climate change initiatives. Last week, just quickly, we need to show our support for developing countries who are going to be the worst hit in that context and in that context may upping the budget for development aid so that earmarked funds aren't hyped up to cope with the climate change problem. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok, are there further speakers? Could I ask the speakers to please have an eye to the clock on right hand side of podium? There is nothing worse than having to intervene and cut people off so just adhere to this.

Patrick Mulholland, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Comrades, brothers and sisters, Patrick Mulholland speaking in opposition to Motion 33 on behalf of NIPSA. NIPSA welcomes the fact that there is a discussion on the All Ireland economy, a cross border economy. It is a very important discussion and it has to take place. But, there is a key part of this motion that we have concerns about and that is that where it addresses the issue of public services and refers to given the, the motion refers to the public service resourcing and says that given the resources available that we should develop our public services. From our point of view, this is quite a dangerous terminology to use. I think, first of all, if you are the relative of someone who is in hospital or

can't get into hospital, there is a major question – what does that mean given the resources available? If you are the parent of a special needs child that can't get assistance to go to school, is that on the basis that the resources are not available? How are we to define what resources should be available and who will make that definition? Will it be the pro-capitalist Governments North and South that will make the definition? I don't think we can take that sort of approach and NIPSA does not think we can take that sort of approach. We are in favour of the development of an All Ireland economy. We are in favour of the economy moving forward but we are in favour as well that that economy being rooted in the fundamental idea that the public, that the working class, have the right to properly resourced public services. Resources that are available based on need not based on the interests of big business capitalism and the pro-capitalist Governments, North and South. We would ask Conference that you oppose this motion not from the point of view that we should not develop the economy but from the point of view that we have to, as a trade union movement, send a clear message to the employers and to the Government that we are only prepared ***end of tape***

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

.....Jerry as well.

Jack O'Connor, Services Industrial Professional Union

President and delegates, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU just responding to the debate on Motion No 32. The delegate from NIPSA quite correctly highlighted the fact that the approach to the implementation to of the social market which has become known as the "Nordic Model" is now under severe and sustained attack. But, in drafting the motion we were focused on the approach to economic and social development which has become known as the "Nordic Model". And, whereas the motion could possible have been slightly better drafted, I would equally suggest with respect to the delegates from NIPSA, that they might have, having identified the problem proposed an amendment rather than suggesting the motion, which we all I think in fairness understand to mean the Nordic Model as we have come to know it, be rejected. And I think that it would be important that delegates on voting on the motion would understand that that is what the Executive Council means in putting the proposition and I would just also make the point that although that approach is under sustained liberal assault at the present time, we have a long, long way to go here on both jurisdictions on this island before we reach the level of social investment that still applies in those countries. It is important and I totally agree with the delegate that in solidarity with workers in progressive people and organisations in those countries we should fight to support the method of implementing the social market approach which has become known as the "Nordic Model", we should fight to ensure that it is defended and that it's supremacy is asserted and reasserted all the time, and

on that basis delegates, I again recommend the motion to you. Thank you President.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Jerry is exercising a right of reply.

Jerry Shanahan, Amicus Unite

Chairman, again just on the last speaker, I think it is just a question of language or use of language. The first bullet point in our motion talks about implementing the planned one hundred euro billion investment. It talks about high productivity economic zones. It talks about eradicating absolute and relevant poverty from both jurisdictions. Now maybe it could have been framed better and if it was framed in the way the delegate suggested I would more than likely agree with the delegate. But that is not what it is meant to say. What it says is, taking into account at the start of the motion the one hundred billion euros available, that is the resource that is available. In other words, you read that sentence to mean not that it's a limiting exercise but given the resources that are available, that is what it says simply. Now I hope that with that clarification it clears the point for people given the resources that are available. I think to oppose the motion simply because of the language rather than the intent, the spirit of what the motion is seeking to do, and I think it is nit-picking rather than anything else. Thank you Chair.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thanks very much. Can I now call the vote on these motions? I am putting Motion 32 to Conference. All those in favour please show, against, abstentions. That motion is carried.

Motion 33 - All those in favour please show, against, abstentions. That motion is carried.

Motion 34 - All those in favour, against, abstentions. That motion is carried.

Motion 35 - All those in favour, against, abstentions. That motion is also carried.

Thank you very much. I have just been asked to announce, make an announcement about the Exhibition Stands, and again delegates are encouraged today to visit the Exhibitor Stands and the VHI stand has a raffle for a €250 hamper and entries are needed today, ok.

I am now going to hand over to Rosheen who is going to Chair the rest of this session.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Could we have proposers please for Motions 36 to 43 which we are now going to take and if you come up so that we don't lose any time in between proposers of motions, and where possible, please, for time reasons if you have your motions formally seconded rather than a lot of speakers. Motion No 36 on Broadband please.

David Bell, Communication Workers Union, UK

President, Congress, David Begg, CWU UK to move proposition 36 and I can state at the outset, President, that my union can accept the amendment to bullet point three as tabled by CWU Ireland, arguable indicating the compelling logic of a merger of the two unions on the islands. Although we state that publicly, it may result in political recriminations by my General Secretary and in that context colleagues, Beidh ár lá linn – our day has come.

Comrades, since the launch of the Office of the Director of Communications Regulation Consultation paper, The Future Delivery of Broadband in Ireland in September in 2002, some progress has been made with the latest Comreg report showing that broadband take up has exceeded 600,000 customers and that broadband subscriptions succeeded that of narrowband for the first time in Quarter 1 of 2007, representing a broadband penetration rate of 14.2 per cent. Colleagues, whilst we have made some progress in the recent five years it remains the case that Ireland, despite its booming economy, still lags behind other leading countries on some indicators. The Government's response has been to seek to introduce legislation in the form of the Communications Regulation Amendment Bill which proposes giving Comreg the power to investigate and prosecute breaches of competition law such as abuse of a dominant position or price fixing in the telecoms market, whilst *eircom* has sought the creation of an industry fund to provide uneconomic telecoms services in uneconomic areas with the fund being financed proportionately by all telecoms firms in this the sector. Perhaps revealing the real reason why roll-out of broadband to the western seaboard and certain urban areas can be described as slow. We cannot therefore leave it to competition in the market alone, to defuse new technologies rapidly in the island. Conference we also share the view of Congress that regulation in the form Comreg is simply to promote competition without assessing the impact on the wider public interest on the assumption that competition will deliver benefits across the society. The notion of the fair and equitable roll-out of broadband in the hands of competition and the regulator alone is therefore questionable. The evidence points to competing demands from the social partners, the right to access for citizens in so called uneconomic areas lost in the quest for maximum profits for the competitors. It is also the case, however, that many potential users are not yet convinced of the significant extra benefits of upgrading to broadband but that is a problem of demand. My union believes that broadband Ireland is the future. A key resource for business, always on and super fast broadband turns the potential of the internet into reality.

Broadband is essential for the economic wellbeing of Ireland, it provides the cutting edge for a modernising economy as well as the potential to improve social inclusion. The CWU believes that the provision of an island wide broadband infrastructure and the stimulation of broadband take up are issues of national interest, appropriate for the Government to address. They should not be left to the market alone to deliver. Some level of political intervention is therefore the only way of achieving universal broadband access, and in particular, Government must bring home to the mass public the wide range of benefits delivered by broadband through a high profile campaign and publicise the benefits of broadband through major innovative education and awareness programmes. And, also, the use of substantial bargaining for purchasing power to promote broadband in the context of providing broadband access for every school, college, library, job centre and hospital in the country as happens in the UK.

In conclusion the development of a vibrant broadband sector has the potential to not only stimulate growth and a new set of higher value industries but also to open up new possibilities for all citizens regardless of geographical location. Conference, I ask your support. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Do we have a seconder? Are you formally seconding this motion? Formally seconded. Could we now have a mover of the amendment please? No? Formally proposing the amendment. Is the amendment accepted by the CWU? Ok, we move then to Motion No 37 on Public Transport. Eamon.

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council. Delegates, protecting the environment and defending the public service in the context of transport policy means supporting the case for rail and subjecting the arguments for road and air expansion to critical scrutiny. We are meeting in a county which was mentioned yesterday doesn't have a single mile or indeed meter of rail left in it. There are plans to expand the Western rail corridor up as far as Claremorris by the year 2014, no plans to take it any further. I come from Derry where we have one remaining real link – the link between Derry and Belfast. There is absolutely no certainty on the part of our Trades Council, no confidence that the rail link will still be there in three years time. There is a need for the trade union movement and others to give a much higher priority to demanding and campaigning for vastly increased investment in a real infrastructure not least on the grounds that rail is by far the most environmentally friendly as well as the safest and in the long term the cheapest mode of transport which we know. We talk about defending the environment. At almost every subject before us at this Conference somebody will mention greenhouse gasses, global warming and related to whatever subject is being focused upon. But in relation to transport there is no evidence, North or South, that the environmental advantages of rail are being factored into planning

for future transport infrastructure. Let me give you an example. I mentioned that we have no rail in the county of Donegal. We have no plans in the twenty-six county area, and incidentally I wish people would stop referring to the Republic of Ireland's territory as Ireland at this Conference or anywhere else. We are part of Ireland too in the North.

There are no plans to go any further North than Claremorris. In Derry we have one remaining rail link. Let me tell you something you don't know about, but is actually quite interesting. Between Derry and Ballymena on that stretch of the Derry Belfast line, there is still old jointed track. The type of joins in the track, which you know is used to give trains that rattling, sort of clickety-clack effect as it went along and made it very uncomfortable, meant you couldn't drink a cup of tea. After you hit Ballymena into Belfast the train speeds up and travels more smoothly. Derry Ballymena is the only stretch of line on this island which has old jointed track. There are plans being submitted to Conor Murphy, the Minister for Regional Development in the North on the spending review for this autumn, has got planned suggestions that the stretch of line from Ballymena to Coleraine be upgraded to modern continuously welded track. There are no plans for changing anything from Coleraine to Derry. That increases our suspicion in Derry Trades Council and among real campaigners and environmentalists across the North West that plans exist to lop off the Coleraine to Derry stretch on that line. We have it on the direct authority of senior officials that our trades council have met, sort of the DRD, said at a meeting in Derry that they cannot guarantee that the line will remain open after 2009/2010. The point is this – that if you close the line between Derry and Coleraine, the idea, the vision of an All Ireland rail network has gone forever because you cannot then take the line North of Claremorris in the twenty-six counties up to meet the Derry line coming through, as it should do, through Sligo and Bundoran and Donegal Town and Letterkenny. This is a small beautiful island. There should be a necklace of rail around it. That is what would give meaning to all our protestation about having an environmentally friendly, a transport infrastructure on this island. Why doesn't it happen? One major reason it doesn't happen is the influence of the construction lobby, the oil lobby and all the other lobbies which are in favour and the aviation lobby most of all, who get everything they want. Bertie Aherne talked yesterday, about all Ireland investment. When they put investment in the infrastructure in Derry and the North West part of the six counties area what they were talking about was making the dual carriageway from Derry to Dungiven, to draw more cars onto the road guzzling poison into the atmosphere. How much money was devoted to rail, not one penny, not one cent, not one cent because we have got two Governments – a Government in the North where old enemies have come together in joint embrace of a neo-liberal agenda and that is what people perceive North and South. The trade union movement must stand up against it. Thank you very much.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

There will be no further indulgence of that kind from the Chair. A seconder please. Formally seconded? Ok. Next motion. Mover of Motion 38 please. Private Equity Bonds – MANDATE. Nobody else will be allowed go over their time, John.

John Douglas, MANDATE

Well, follow that as the man said. John Douglas, MANDATE trade union proposing Motion 28. The rise of private equity and hedge funds means that a growing number of workers throughout the world are employed by such companies. The magnitude of these funds are such that they ensure that no company is safe no matter how well managed. The result is that many large companies are now managed by people who have no long term interest in the development of the company. Their primary aim of such funds is to maximise profits in the shortest period of time. This often means the selling off of valuable property assets, slashing workforce numbers, the withdrawal of terms and conditions of employment, reduction of job security and the loading of that company with huge debt.

Recently we have seen such companies as Boots the chemist, Sainsburys etc being targeted by private equity buyouts. The Automobile Association witnessed three and a half thousand jobs being slashed and Birdseye over 600 jobs being when they were brought out by private equity funds. The very high rates of return require to finance that debt driven by private equity buyouts can jeopardise the target companies long term interest and provision of decent employment conditions. We call on Congress to support a campaign where private equity funds and hedge funds are called to account for their activities. And the introduction of a regulatory standard to ensure the following. That there is transparency, prudential rules, and risk management and reporting, that workers' rights to collective bargaining, information and consultation within the firms should be regarded as a key mechanism by which long term interest of companies can be promoted, that tax regulation need to be harmonized to ensure that short term interest of profit maximisation and investor return are not favoured over other forms of investment and the corporate governance, the current regime folks is generally on publically traded companies and there are weaker governance required for unlisted companies. This needs to be changed to guard against short term asset extraction and to ensure that the primary responsibility of the Board of Directors is to preserve the long term interest of companies. MANDATE moves Motion 38, thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you John. Do we have a seconder? Formally seconding that motion. Thank you

Motion No 39 – Independent Radio Stations. NUJ – Seamus.

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists

Vice President, Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists proposing Motion 39. In my previous life I was a journalist and I still bear the scars of sitting at tribunals enquiring into applications for the radio franchise. On that occasion every corporation and capitalist interested in local radio wheeled out trade unionists, ICA Presidents, Deans, Deacons and Do Gooders to prove their credentials as community based stations. Once they got the license they threw Deans, Deacons and the Do Gooders over, they sold the license and they made a fortune. Local radio is a license to print money and the failure of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland to properly monitor local radio as a resource, and broadcasting is a resource, is a shame, is a scandal and it is something which we have failed to address up to now. Inspector of Ray Burke, that well known tax-dodger and criminal, haunts local radio in Ireland. My members in RTE are still paying the price of the radio cap through inferior pension scheme and every time someone looks at their pension in RTE and says what are you doing about it, my temptation is to say don't blame me, blame Ray Burke, doesn't get me very far.

The fact of the matter is that local radio is a resource and we need to tackle the issue of proper control of local radio. At the moment the key players in local radio are Independent News and Media, Thomas Crosbie Holdings, Denis O'Brien, well known paragons of virtue. People who have are also involved in cross ownership through the media industry.

My final point because I don't intend to go into what was originally a very detailed script in this motion, is to ask all of you as trade unionists, to deal with community radio. Before you give an interview ask two questions, one are you a member of the NUJ and the second one might sound stupid and I address this comment in particular to those of you who are asked to be interviewed by Newstalk or TV3, the fact of the matter is that there are a number of media organisations in this country who are exploiting young graduates on the basis that these young people coming into the market think that celebrity will get them far. It may do, but celebrity does not butter parsnips. That's a reality and it doesn't pay the mortgage.

Finally, can I say to you in relation to local radio, it is one of the hardest sectors to organise in. The reason is that because independent local radio is a low paid, highly exploitive environment. People just simply leave. They leave to go to the

public services broadcaster or to work in McDonalds. That is not an exaggeration; we have had a recent experience of that. One great failure of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland is an absolute refusal in considering applications for local radio licenses to consider whether or not, not only whether there should be union recognition but employment standards. That has to change and until it does we are calling for a moratorium, we believe that broadcasting is a resource and we are calling on the Minister for Communications, the new Minister for Communications, with a proven track record to call a halt until such time as we have a real and meaningful broadcasting policy in Ireland for independent local radio. I move the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Seamus. Do we have a seconder? Formally seconded. Thank you. We move on then to Motion No 40, Time for the Arts, Equity. Motion No 40, No, no proposer. Can you make your way up quickly please and proposers for future motions should be up here already. 40 is coming up.

Sheena McDonald, Musician's Union

Delegates, Sheena McDonald, Musician's Union. I had actually prepared to support this motion not to move it but I don't want to see it fall. I think it is true to say that Northern Ireland arts and cultural sector is currently facing a funding crises which threatens many of its cultural institutions, events and projects. Year on year of chronic lack of investment both by local councils and the Westminster Government puts Northern Ireland at a distinct disadvantage; I am out of breath running up here, in comparison to the rest of the UK and Ireland. This is further compounded by the recent announcement that lottery funding for the arts will fall by a further 2.5 million due to the London 2012 Olympic Games. The affect of the lack of investment is debilitating, a struggle, compromise, and survival dominate arts organisations instead delivering cultural opportunities to local communities.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of driving up to Letterkenny to visit some friends of mine and I couldn't believe it as I went up the road, it seems that every town and village on the way was promoting its own local arts and music festivals. In contrast in Belfast the plight of the Belfast festival at Queens, the largest of its kind in Ireland, covering all sorts of art forms, whether you are into jazz music, theater, lecturer or comedy, which attracts over 50,000 visitors to Belfast, was supposed to launch a campaign to save itself. Our reduced festival will happen in 2007 but the future is insecure. Only five years ago in response to a funding crisis, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in the Northern determined that Northern Ireland did indeed need a properly maintained funded professional orchestra. Two years later the Ulster orchestra had funding levels reduced yet again and have continued to do so year on year and what's the result of that? Its players, whose pay remains close to the bottom of the UK orchestral pay league,

and an orchestra which continues, if it continues on a trajectory will lead to a serious and permanently damaging cutback if the situation is not rectified. How ironic it is that DCAL has spent millions on the rediscovered Northern Ireland programme. Indeed this week it will be showcasing arts and culture in Northern Ireland at Smithsonian Institute's Folklife Festival. And, I quote, highlight Northern Ireland's thriving economy, revitalised city's unique and fascinating culture to attract investment and business. Yet, back home arts organisations struggle to survive. Our members, if they are employed are on low pay, but of course in the face of the majority as freelancers face little in terms of employment rights and income security. All too often Northern Ireland faces an artistic brain drain as the brightest talents, whether aspiring rock stars or classical musicians are forced to travel to Edinburgh, London or Dublin to make a living and find the support they need.

Just to finish off I would say that the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has shown the benefits of investment in arts. For every pound invested, £2.60 goes back into the economy. Arts funding maintains over 2,000 jobs. Two thirds of arts' activity supports cross-community participation. Yesterday we heard the debate on Northern Ireland and the many challenges ahead for devolved Government. I would argue that a thriving cultural industry and increased public funding of arts would be one of the critical measures of future success.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Is there a seconder for Motion No 40? Formally seconded, thank you. We will now take Motion 41, Paddy.

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, Building and Allied Trades Union

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, BATU moving Motion 41. The text of this motion speaks for itself. We are not asking for anything new. We are simply asking that sufficient resources be put in place to enable the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, the body charged with the responsibility of policing of the provisions of the Companies Act to do its job.

As a society we recognise the need to regulate the corporate sector. The Companies Act combined with the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement should be sufficient to keep corporate shenanigans under control provided of course there are sufficient resources to do the job on a day to day basis. While the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement has dealt with a number of high profile cases and well too, it is vitally important that routine cases are dealt with as well. Our motion is not an attack on the Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement, this is about resources. It is up to that Office to disperse resources as they see fit. For example, companies trading in this country must register within thirty days of commencing trading in accordance with the provisions of the Act. This applies to all companies, foreign and domestic.

However, a growing number do not register and resources are not available to police the non-registration of companies, especially foreign based ones. Registration is the most basic provision of the Act. Without registration we can hardly expect the authorities to enforce the other provisions of the Act. To add insult to injury, some of the companies concerned have been awarded public contracts which presumably require them to clock in somewhere with someone along the way. We have examples of foreign companies who have been unable to avoid compliance within industry agreements and labour legislation simply because they have not registered in this state in accordance with the Companies Act. As an example, the Labour Court will not hear cases involving companies who do not have an established place of business in this state, which means in the building industry that legally binding procedures cannot be exhausted.

In conclusion, we are recognising the corporate sector needs to be regulated. That indicates sufficient resources must be put in place to enable those regulations to have effect. I move.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Paddy. Could we have a seconder? Formally seconded, Mick Halpenny. Motion No 42, please mover.

John Maloney, Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians

John Maloney, UCATT. Fellow delegates, in Ireland today there are 700 charities engaged in work. They have got to engaged in the health and welfare of Irish people. Apart from big names such as Simon Community, Irish Cancer and the Cystic Fibrosis Society, the St Vincent de Paul etc., there are dozens and dozens of smaller charities working hard to relieve the distress and lack of facilities in their own particular field of interest. Consider for a moment the Fiends of Our Lady's Hospital, a group that works tirelessly to equip the nation's flag pediatric hospital with essential equipment. Or closer to home, our very own charity who are here with us today, the Construction Workers' Health Trust, who you can see their display outside and they are offering free blood pressure testing to delegates. Building workers pay a small weekly contribution to the Trust which was established by the Construction unions and provide vital health screening on site up and down the country. Since 1997, the Trust has screened over 50,000 workers. This has resulted in a number of them having to be referred to a doctor for whatever hidden conditions. Conditions such as raised cholesterol or high blood pressure which these workers have been unaware of until they took the test on site. Every penny the Trust spends on medical equipment including a fine mobile medical unit, which you will have seen parked outside, is subject to VAT of 21 per cent. Last year alone, the Trust paid over €48,000 in VAT. If they had been exempt from VAT they could be well have been two mobile units outside. Believe it or not, delegates, the charities in this country between them, pay over €25 million in VAT each year on items such as medical equipment,

computers, stationary, blankets and so one. It's madness for them to pay VAT on their telephones and their computer systems and our own charity, CWHT, pays VAT on blood pressure and cholesterol testing equipment. These charities, who work tirelessly to shore up many gaps in our lumbering health service by providing much needed equipment and services, are taxed for their efforts. There is a lobby group formed called "The Irish Charities Reform Group" and approximately 140 charities working principally in the area of health and welfare all signed up to this group. Their main aim is to lobby the Government to introduce a VAT Refund Scheme for certain specified activities. So far their calls have fallen on deaf ears. Such a scheme has already been introduced in Denmark and has provided Danish charities with a much needed shot in the arm.

We are asking this Conference to endorse the proposal that the Government introduce a VAT Refund Scheme for registered charities. We estimate that it will cost up to €25 million in a full year for this. I move the motion. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you John. Do we have a seconder? Formally seconded. Motion 43, Sole Traders, BATU.

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, Building and Allied Trades Union

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, BATU moving Motion 43. If you have a television set you need a license. If you have a dog you need a license but if you are a sole trader you don't need anything at all. You can set up in business, you can employ workers, and thousands of workers in some cases and do the kind of thing entrepreneurs do with little check or regulations on your activities. This motion seeks to regulate the activities of sole traders in the same way as companies. The regulations governing companies are not ideal, there is a problem about resources but nevertheless, I don't think and our union doesn't think that sole traders should be let off the hook.

We are asking Congress to put this issue on the agenda to make sole traders accountable. To make sure that they do have to regulate, that they do have to provide accounts etc and this is a very important sector of the economy, sole traders. Some of them are very, very small employers, some of them are quite substantial, but there is little check on them. In the building industry there are a lot of sole traders and that is a very charitable term to place them. We want to see a degree of regulation in this area and I think it would be in the interest of the entire private sector that this is done, if not society as a whole. And, I think, you know, when this issue was raised if we are told that this will cramp the style of business, that is exactly what it is designed to do. It is designed to regulate and police a very vital sector of our economy. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Paddy. Could we have a seconder for Motion 43? Formally seconded thank you. Now, I now ask other speakers on any of the motion Nos. 37 to 43. You have very limited time I'm afraid.

Michael Halpenny, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

I want to speak to two motions, can I have the indulgence of twice.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Yes, but you can't have twice the time.

Michael Halpenny, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

That's ok. Grand, staring now. Firstly, Michael Halpenny, SIPTU. I can't promise you the pyrotechnics of my colleague, Eamon McCann on public transport but I just want to make just a few very brief points. I agree wholeheartedly with the motion, both in terms of public policy environmental concerns and the interests of our members as citizens and transport workers and consumers. What needs to be done is number one, is to beef up the cross-border dimension of Transport 21, existing in a fig-leaf only. Secondly, we need continuous support in investment for Irish Rail which is a successful public company, delivering service. We need to expand that service in terms of frequency and indeed affordable pricing. Dublin Bus has more busses thanks to trade union pressure but we need the quality bus corridors there to get those busses running to get people out of cars to improve the situation in terms of frequency and on time. Bus Eireann is battling away on an uneven pitch. We need a revision of the law in relation to licensing. Currently you can go out and buy a bus license for the price of a packet of fags. And what that means basically is that the publically funded company, that we all fund directly and indirectly is competing unfairly against private operators who will in no way commit to the public service mandate that Bus Eireann is obliged to do.

Finally, in relation to Luas – what we need is a little bit of joined up thinking in Dublin and we need the extension of Luas on wheels, not necessary on fixed track, to Cork, and Limerick and Galway and indeed to the North if that is feasible. What we don't need are people bleating about competition and privatization. It didn't work and it doesn't work. What we do need is recognition by Governments North and South that public transport is a service for all and not a profit opportunity for the few.

Now to the much more mundane graveyard shift of the Companies Act of 1963. First of all I want to compliment our colleagues in construction for bringing this, maybe a somewhat narrow issue, to your view. The context really is this. There

are strident calls from the business community about red tape and about regulatory burden but you have to ask yourself this very simple question. Why does the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement exist in the first place? Well, I will tell you why. Because back in 1998, the level of compliance with the most basic, the most basic tenants of the law in relation to company registration was somewhat hovering around about 17 per cent. That means that the vast majority of companies were not complying with their legal obligations. Now because of the powers of the Company Registration Office and the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement have been established, that compliance rate has gone up to the magical level of somewhere at about 70 per cent. We still have go 30 per cent to go but we have a particular problem here that there are companies who are not even complying now. Now, is it because the law is complicated? Not at all. There is a specific section in the 1963 Act which says you must register within one month of trading here. Secondly, in case you missed it the first time round, the 11th Directive on Company Law of the European Community and if you are really remedial, there is a statutory instrument which repeats all that, so three times you are told and three strikes you should be out – simple as that.

One final very fundamental point which is made by both the extreme right and the moderate left like myself, and it is this. The state in this jurisdiction and in the other jurisdiction on this whole island of ours of Ireland bestows on citizens the privilege, and it is a privilege of limited liability, it encourages business and protects the citizens against honest business failure. And, all they are asked to do in reply to that is simply comply with the law. So the message to the business community here is very, very simple. Compliance is not just for Christmas, it is for every day.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Do we have any other speakers on any of these motions? If not we will proceed to take votes.

We will start with Motion No 36 on Broadband. Can I have all in favour please, against, any abstentions? That is unanimously carried.

No 37 – Public Transport - all in favour please, against, any abstentions? That is unanimously carried as well.

No 38 on Private Equity Bonds, MANDATE motion - all in favour please, against, abstentions? That is unanimously carried as well.

Motion No 39 – Independent Radio Stations - all in favour please, against, abstentions? That is unanimously.

Motion No 40 - all in favour please, against, any abstentions? That is unanimously carried.

Motion No 41 – Companies Act - all in favour please, against, any abstentions? That is unanimously carried as well.

Motion No 42 on Registered Charities VAT - all in favour please, against, any abstentions? Did I see an abstention? No unanimously carried.

Motion 43 on Sole Traders - all in favour please, against, are you against? No Abstentions? That is unanimously carried as well. Thank you very much.

Could we have the proposer of Motion 44 as soon as possible please? Motion No 44 – Public Service Staffing.

Kevin Callinan, Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union

Kevin Callinan, IMPACT. Colleagues, this more than just a motion complaining about unmanageable workloads and absent services. It goes to the heart of the broader debates we have been having on employment standards, privatisation and quality public services. Of course the recruitment embargo or employment sealing as it is now styled in the South, is hampering service delivery, is delaying improved services and is creating impossible strains on workers. But, delegates, it is also increasing pressure to find alternative ways of plugging the gaps. Ways such as agency working, contracting out or straightforward privatisation. For example, within the Health Services Executive in the South we are encountering growing trends of management seeking tenders for identifiable blocks of work. Work that is the core business of a public health system often involving health professionals. Despite the terms of *Towards 2016*, the practice on the ground differs. And increasingly we don't become aware of these plans until they have been well advanced. Apart from the general undesirability of this practice there is also an irony. If these developments gain hold the fact that these health professionals will enjoy inferior pay and conditions will be used as an argument to depress the pay and conditions of their counterparts in the public system. Whenever it comes to pay determination in benchmarking or whatever other system is in place. In other words, delegates, the race to the bottom is not just a private sector concern. Agency staff have been a regular feature of life in the health service for some time, particularly in nursing. In recent years employment restrictions have been cited by management as justification to extend this to other categories. While our own union has had a recent success with the a Labour Court Recommendation in relation to agency staff in the West of Ireland, the fact remains that the kernel of the argument is being missed by Government. Agency staff can cost almost twice as much as regular employees. And, when you factor in the importance of ensuring continuity of service delivery, the issue should be a no brainer. One could be forgiven, delegates, for wondering if there is something more going on here. How can we ensure quality public services if

we are forced to operate a cumbersome system where we are either prevented in filling vacancies as they arise or we have to endure extraordinary delays in doing so. Where the cost of filling the job can be nearly twice as much as doing it on a regular basis, and most importantly, when from the service users point of view it involves unnecessary disruptive changes in personnel. Is there any wonder that we face the prospect of privatisation in the form of co-location or more creeping versions in other services? Delegates, end these crazy restrictions now. Give us a level playing field pitch. I move.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Can we have a seconder? Formally seconded, over there, thank you, thank you. Any speakers on Motion 44, otherwise I am going to take the vote straight away. Speaker.

Maria Morgan, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Conference, Maria Morgan, NIPSA to oppose Motion 44. Brothers and sisters, NIPSA can agree in part with the sentiments of this motion and indeed agree that a growing population will need a growing public service. However, our difficulty with this motion is very simply that it states that it accepts the need to control public service employment numbers. NIPSA cannot accept that and to us controlling employment numbers means eventually eroding employment and that is not what the trade union movement is about. If the employer wants to control public services numbers that's for them, it is not for us. Should this motion be passed it would become ICTU policy. It will effectively render us as an advocate of the employers' attempts to further cull the public sector jobs. We would be left in a very difficult position with the employer. Where would we be in negotiations if the employer knows that we, as the trade union movement in this country, accept that there is a need to control public service numbers? To give an example, I work in an area of the public service which is the equivalent to the Department of Social and Family Affairs. We have just come through a period of over three years, 674 jobs have been shed. We are now entering into a new round; we are under a new initiative called the Comprehensive Spending Review. It is proposed that we will lose up to 1,400 jobs. We have told the employer that if this happens there will be devastation and the organisation would collapse, not to mention our members jobs, the public and the in the wider sense the economy. We have told the employer that NIPSA will not take another attack on the public service lightly. We will and we are obliged to fight it by all means necessary. Conference, if we adopt this motion, Congress will be on record as supporting the acceptance of the need to control employment numbers in the public sector. Any proposed cuts in the public sector in this country conflict with the union ethos of opposition to the further erosion of the public sector. Our job is to protect the public sector. Please oppose the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Do we have any other speakers on this motion? Helen are you speaking on 44?

Helen Murphy, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

President, delegates, friends, Helen Murphy, SIPTU supporting Motion 44. It is not an exaggeration to say our health service is in crisis. Indeed, listening to Health Minister, Mary Harney last week, stating that patients were having a pleasant experience being cared for on a trolley demonstrates how far removed she is from the reality of the appalling state of our Accident and Emergency Unit and our health service in general. It is worrying to think the continued use of trolleys may now have been accepted as Government policy. The Health Strategy 2001 gave us many commitments – more hospital beds, the provision of a new model of primary care and increased staffing for our health services, to outline some. Very little of these have been delivered on. However, what happened in December, 2002? A cap was put on health sector employment resulting in the closure of some wards, home helps cut, leading to community care services suffering and causing the crippling of some public services. It has led to existing staff being overstretched and stressed to breaking point. And, it has resulted in the shift towards private provision through contracted agency workers, nursing, clerical and support staff. Did the cap achieve the goal to curtail spending? It did not. Expenditure increased in some areas due to the shift to private provision. While nursing numbers were curtailed, there was an increase in the use of agency nurses which is more expensive. As a health service worker in the nursing profession, I tell you, you are getting poor value for money and a deteriorating health service. I call on Congress to actively campaign for the embargo on recruitment to be abolished. Thank you delegates.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Helen. Do we have any other speakers? Speaking Motion 44.

Noel Traynor, Irish Nurses Organisation

President, delegates, Noel Traynor, Irish Nurses Organisation speaking in support of the motion. Just briefly, in recent days, members that I am representing in Sligo General who have just qualified as nurses have been told that rather than be given contracts they are now being told they have to join an agency. That is unacceptable, it not good for the provision of care and it has been openly admitted by management that the only reason for that is the cap on posts, that it is more expensive to pay people as agency nurses. I support the motion, thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Do we have any other speakers on 44?

Patricia Tobin, Public Services Executive Union

President, delegates, Patricia Tobin, PSEU supporting Motion 44. Colleagues, we represent over 1,000 staff in the Department of Social & Family Affairs. The Department is currently making weekly payments to over 950,000 claimants, with over 1.5 million people in total benefiting from social welfare schemes. This figure is continually increasing as the population grows and improvements to schemes are implemented. The staffing level for the Department was set in 2003 and there has been no allowance for additional staffing resources to implement changes to income supports for people. The results have been a reduced level of service to the public. Specific examples of the level of increased pressure on staff are the number of claimants of family income supplement has doubled over the past five years without any increase in staffing in that area. The number of persons in receipt of disability allowance has increased by 60 per cent in six years. There has been a 20 per cent increase in population since 2003, with the resultant service requirements, including allocation of PPS numbers, applications for child benefit and other social welfare schemes. The introduction of half rate carer's allowance has potential to generate an additional 18,000 claims. There are currently thousands of claims for migrant workers for child benefit and early child care supplement outstanding. The affect of the inadequate level of staff is having on service delivery can be identified by delays across the string of applications for the various schemes. In all cases, processing times are failing to meet the standard set for the schemes. For example, entitlement to contributory old age pension can expect to wait over three months to have their pensions awarded.

Due to the cap on the numbers of staff we have been making cases for an increase in staff and we are being told that this Department is over staffed and indeed, the Departmental Council wrote to the Minister back in September, 2005, seeking a meeting to discuss the current staffing crisis, and it took until February, 2007 for that meeting to be held. It is safe to say that the Minister listened attentively to us but nothing has happened since. I therefore urge Conference to support this motion. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Patricia. Any other speakers on Motion 44? Do you want to respond?

Kevin Callinan, Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union

The right of reply specifically in relation to the point on the need to acknowledge some mechanism to control numbers and it is simply, delegates, a matter of tactics and learning from history. We have been here before. If we don't acknowledge the need to control the growth in public sector numbers, then we invite Government to impose an even more restrictive mechanism. Going back to the eighties and the early nineties, we in the South had the most severe employment embargos imposed, so what the motion seeks to do is to grow public services in a way that it ensures, firstly obviously, that they will expand and grow but that also that we will in doing so protect employment standards within the entire public sector. That's the intent behind the motion. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. If there are no more speakers on Motion 44, I am going to take the vote on that motion now and will the movers of motions 45, 46 and 47 come up and get ready please.

Vote on Motion 44 – all in favour, against, - a few against, abstentions, that's carried.

Now, do I have a mover for Motion 45? Patricia.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Vice President of Congress

Vice President, delegates, Patricia McKeown, UNISON moving Motion 45, principally on the grounds that I might not get another chance to do this for a long time but this needs done. It's a very clear, self-explanatory motion. It's about the opposition of this movement to privatisation and the support of this movement for public services. And that is not the exclusive business of public service unions. This is a citizenship issue. It applies across this island and it is a very key issue. And a principal point is made in this motion. Now, I do want to say that despite the remarks that were made yesterday, I do believe that this imperfect process we have of making policy in this movement is still the best expression of the democratic will of trade unions in Ireland meeting together in this Congress. And I don't think we have some kind of ad hoc approach to policy making. For the 25 or 26 years I have been involved in this Conference, I have seen very strategic policy made by trade unions on a whole host of key citizenship and public policy issues and this is one of them. And we are entitled to expect that there is an unambiguous opposition to privatisation of public services in this Congress.

Maggie Thatcher, thank you, had the view that it didn't matter who delivered it so long as it was delivered. Tony Blair took that view to a new level and successive Irish Governments have very clearly promulgated that view. And I have even heard it said in this movement and there is no place for that statement. But, what

we can't do is have a policy in opposition to privatisation of public services and a different set of definitions North and South. In the North we are unambiguous about the fact that there are public services, delivered by public servants, and anybody who comes to do something damaging to that system will have to get by the trade union movement first. I know that what we have on this island are two very different bases of public services. We have one taxation based in areas like the health & welfare services free at the point of need, and I know that public services have grown up in a different way because of necessity in the South of Ireland. But, that does not mean that we accept that we will forever have a mixed economy of public service delivery, because the delivery of public services in the control of Governments by public servants is a democratic expression of the people and when it moves somewhere else there can no longer be a democratic expression of the people. We, therefore, cannot afford in this movement to have definitions in national agreements which appear to have us signing up to any form of privatisation of public services. We also have to have a very clear, strategic approach aimed at bringing those services currently delivered in the market back or for the first time, into the control of the public service and that needs a real strategy. So, this motion seeks to do two things: it says no more ambiguity on privatisation – let us be properly aligned on this issue. It also says let's have a strategic campaign in the South equivalent to that in Congress in the North in support of public services. We know they need to change, we know they need to modernise, we know they need to evolve but on our terms, not on the neo-liberals' terms, not on the market's terms, not on the terms of two Governments who have not yet expressed support for public services. I move. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Do we have a seconder for Motion 45? Secunder, down there, thank you. You are moving 46?

John Corey, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

John Corey, NIPSA to move Motion 46. This motion addresses three matters relating to water and sewerage services and water charges. The first paragraph targets the role of the European Commission now plays in the disgraceful worldwide attempts to make and privatise the supply of public water services. Now, excellent research by the European Federation of Public Service Unions, EFPSU, reveals that the European Commission granted a one million euro fund to an organisation called The Public Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility, believe it or not, set up by the UK and Japan Governments and the World Bank and their mission is to privatise water services. And, they are seeking to do so in thirty seven countries and the motion is therefore calling for, in the first instance, for this Executive Council to press the two Government, North and South, to go to the Commission and to stop that funding.

The second paragraph to the motion restates fundamental principals; I think we can all agree with. That the supply of clean drinking water for all people to the world is a fundamental human right and that that basic fundamental human right should be allowed to become a commodity, to be bought and sold in the market place. And, it must be remembered that the wholly privatised water service in England is the exception and not the rule. And, our believe is that we must strongly oppose any privatisation.

The third element deals with the situation we face in Northern Ireland and it is our belief that water service should be a public service, that water service should not be something subject to household water charges that motivates us. Now, last year the Northern Ireland Conference made an unprecedented decision to adopt and support a policy of non-payment of water charges, and I believe, I believe it was that policy and our pursuit of that policy which my own union backed with work and with £50,000 so far that helped to ensure we didn't have water charges in Northern Ireland on 1 April this year. But it would be naive of us colleagues in the extreme to think that we still don't have a major battle to fight on water charges. Now, I believe we can beat water charges and I believe it is an issue on which the trade union movement in Northern Ireland has connected with the public but we cannot expect, we cannot expect the public to back us if it is not evident that all trade unions, all trade unions are fully backing the campaign of non-payment. That's an essential point that we have to understand. The goals of our campaign are still to be achieved. No water charges for homes, no privatisation, no metering and an accountable public water service. And, when we go to meet the Minister, Conor Murphy, on Monday next, I believe the message we have to take from this Conference is that if this review process we are now engaged in fails to remove the threat of the imposition of water charges in Northern Ireland, this trade union movement, North and South, is backing an unequivocal don't pay water charges campaign. As I said – the last point – as I said at our Conference just recently, the historic mission of trade unions is to unite workers in the common interests, to speak out and defend the interests of working people and their families and I can't think of an issue that better fits that mission than stopping household water charges in Northern Ireland and stopping it extending to the Republic of Ireland because I believe that is what would happen if we get it in Northern Ireland. I ask you to fully support the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you John. Do we have a seconder for Motion 46, formerly seconded. Can I call on the mover of 47 and also I am going to take 48 after that so if the mover of 48 wants to come up.

Louise O'Donnell, Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union

Louise O'Donnell, IMPACT moving Motion 47 on Quality Public Services. Colleagues, the people who use and deliver public services in this island are all

too aware of their failings and shortcomings. And, trade unions North and South have campaigned for decades for the reforms and investment necessary to deliver world class responsive services in health, education, local authorities, transport, utilities and elsewhere. For public servants, most of whom have little or no control over the decisions that determine the range and quality of services, have become almost the only focus of criticism in the public debate. We have witnessed the growing tendency among commentators and politicians of all parties to attribute all the problems and set up myths about public servants, their pay and their performance. The myths are that there are too many of us that we are paid too much, that we don't care about the public and that we can't get anything right and, above all, that we are incapable of reform. Many of the so called experts who promote these views at every opportunity understand little and care less about bringing quality and equity to public services. They hope that feeding the myth that the public sector is incapable of reforming itself will embody on politicians to embrace more privatisation and outsourcing and to seek market solutions to every problem. Let's face it Conference – they have had a fair degree of success and no wonder. Their arguments suit politicians. They divert attention away from years and years of underinvestment. They disguise years of ongoing political failure to make the hard choices necessary to bring real quality and equality to public services delivery.

Conference, this will continue until this Congress and its private and public sector affiliates actively campaign to promote the huge contribution of our public services and the people who deliver them. If this movement can't be persuaded to put time, effort and imagination into defending our public services, you can be sure no one else will. The inevitable consequences will be a downward spiral of failing public services and more privatisation.

Earlier this year, my union, IMPACT lost a campaign to defend public services and the people who deliver them. We are trying to debunk some of the widespread myths about the numbers, performance and pay of public servants, and we have dug up some little known facts about how public services are trying and very often succeeding to improve services. For instance, did you know that relative to our population Ireland has fewer public servants than many other countries including the USA and the EU average? Did you know that many international surveys, including OECD studies, consistently show that Irish public servants performance compares well to those in other European countries? And did you know that the valid complaints to the public service ombudsman have fallen consistently since the mid-1990s.

Motion 47 calls on Congress to support efforts by trade unions and others to defend public services and people who deliver them, and to continue to campaign for higher quality, well resourced and equitable public services. I urge you to contribute to the campaign and I urge you to support Motion 47.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Louise. Do we have a seconder for Motion 47? Secunder over there, thank you, formerly seconded. I now call on the mover of Motion 48 please.

Michael Robinson, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Chair, Conference, Michael Robinson from NIPSA to move Motion No 48. There is clear evidence that the private finance initiative/Public Private Partnership approach to the delivery of public services has been a disaster. Its been a disaster in terms of long term debt, in terms of the tax payer, a disaster in terms of loss of democratic accountability in the delivery of public services and it has been a disaster for politics because it constraints future administrations in to what they can do and how they can act politically, because the contracts that are involved in PPPs are typically for 20 to 30 years. Gordon Brown, former Chancellor of the Exchequer has basked in a reputation for confidence in managing the capitalist economy, prudent not profit legacy was his watchwords but his reputation is ill deserved when you look at PPPs and PFI. You would wonder how he had got away with it. Well, it being new Labour it is down to dodgy dossiers. Gordon Brown has commissioned about five of them but the most significant of them was a dossier done by a company called "Matt McDonald" and they looked at the ethicacy of PFI/PPP schemes. Their report is a report on which the evidence is based but loads costs against the public sector comparators and PFI. But their report was taken apart by significant consultants like Professor Alison Pollack from the University of Edinburgh and when they looked at the data in the report what they found was they hadn't compared projects that were like with like. They hadn't compared projects on a sufficient scale and of course, being PFI they ignored all the IT problems that had arisen over the years. Despite that report being damned and damned in a very scientific way, Gordon Brown, decided he would put it would put it into his Tablets of Stone, the Treasury's Green Book. Now, as a consequence of that in all public sector schemes under conventional procurement in the UK and in Northern Ireland, we have to load a bias against the public sector delivering it themselves of anything between a range of 2 to 24 per cent. That is the fraud of the Treasury's Green Book. That is what the dodgy dossier has driven. Now, as a consequence of that all projects in the public sector, or most projects, are now outsourced. And they are outsourced not because there is any value for money, not because there is any better way to deliver it by the private sector but simply because the people that have to cost all of those projects have to load on an inefficiency factor – it is a shameful face against the public sector doing it themselves. That is how Gordon Brown has got away with it. The legacy that Tony Blair has is Iraq, the legacy that Gordon Brown has is PFI/PPP schemes – shame on him. Support the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Could we have a seconder? Secunder for Motion 48.

Brian Campfield, Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Thanks Conference. Brian Campfield, NIPSA to second this motion and I'll not take up a lot of time. To say that private finance is a major feature of life in Northern Ireland, for instance in the North 25 per cent of the public investment will be delivered through the use of private finance. Currently the debt, public debt in respect of Public Private Partnerships and Private Finance Initiatives is 1.5 billion and this will increase double to 3 billion as a result of the civil service accommodation workplace 2010 project which is basically the Government handing over civil services state to the private sector for around 200 million pounds. And, the civil service will lease back basically from the private sector and pay for that. There have been other difficulties with the Private Finance Initiative. Michael Robinson has highlighted the inflexibility and really the burden which will be around public authorities in respect of payback. The one flagship project in Northern Ireland, Balmoral High School, has actually closed due to the lack of pupils. While it wasn't the Private Finance Initiative that is basically responsible for the closure, what that means is that you will have an empty school and continued payments over a 20/25 year period for a school which no longer basically exists.

The motion basically has three, asks the Executive Council to do three things. One is to campaign against PFI, especially in respect of the joint North/South funding arrangements. Two, to arrange a trade union North/South Conference on PPP/PFI, to ensure that we have a high level and an assured approach to this particular use of private finance. And, the third one is to update the guidance which Congress has produced. Conference, this is a critical issue and this motion asks for practical steps to be taken. Which, if it is implemented and these steps are taken, it will assist us in meeting the challenge that will be faced from PPP in the future. So, I ask you to support the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. I will now take speakers on Motions 45-48 but before doing so, I would like to call on the General Secretary to make a couple points of clarification about two of these motions – David.

David Begg, General Secretary, Congress

Thank you Vice President. I have been asked by the Executive Council just to clarify a point in relation to the implementation, not the substance, but the implementation of Motion 45, and to a lesser extent possibly Motion 48, in the event that they are passed by Conference. The technical point that arises actually arises in relation to PPPs because Section 10 of *Towards 2016* is a provision intended to give us some control over the introduction of PPPs in the

Republic and unwinding it would in fact give the authorities a free hand which wouldn't be the intention of anybody I expect. It is a useful provision. It has given us some leverage in disputes situations, particularly in the local authorities who have had three disputes in which we have used that provision in the last few months, for example.

In any event I think that the formal position is that *Towards 2016* has been accepted by a membership ballot vote at a Special Conference under the Constitution for that purpose so we cannot denounce it or any section of it without being conflicting with the Constitution so therefore, I am just really clarifying on behalf of the Executive Council that we will not be withdrawing or removing provision of *Towards 2016* arising from the passage of these motions, so that we don't want to find ourselves in two years time arguing that we didn't actually implement the motions in the way that people intended them to be. I mean, other than that you will have gauged, I hope, from what was said here yesterday, that defending the role of Government in the economy is a very important issue for Congress. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Do we have any speakers on any of those motions? 45, 46, Eamon – which one?

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council. I am supporting all four motions in this section but focussing particularly on the issue of water charges. I endorse every thing John Corey said and I take the opportunity to pay tribute to him personally and to NIPSA for the role that they paid in the non-payment campaign which has succeeded at least in postponing the introduction of water charges in the North, and I would draw your attention to the implication at least of his mildly worded remarks towards the end of his address when he appealed to other unions, and in particular to other unions involved in the water service to show some real commitment and to get involved in a practical way in supporting the non-payment campaign. Let me say this as well. The importance of this issue lies in the following connection. If we defeat water charges in the North we will have defeated privatisation. The whole point of water charges is to provide a revenue flow for a private company. If privatisation is not on the agenda there is no point to water charges. That has been made explicitly clear by the British Treasury, which has already laid down, and even under the existing circumstances where they say they are simply moving to a Government owned company rather than to outright privatisation, the British Treasury has said explicitly that the Northern Executive cannot use the revenue from water charges against borrowing against infrastructural purposes because, and they spelt it out, that that money from water charges, the revenue from water charges will not be public money. It will be private money. The privatisation process is already underway. If we defeat

water charges and there is no revenue flow, then brothers and sisters there will be no privatisation and think about it, if we can defeat the privatisation of our water service in the North, that will have enormous implications for the future of our movement and for working class politics generally and for the defence of the public service not only all over Ireland but all over these islands. It is that vital to do it and one last thing I would draw to your attention. The very nature of the anti-water charges campaign which impacts mostly on the poor, the poorer you are because of the cap, the poorer you are the more higher proportion of your income you will have to pay in water charges. And, this campaign cannot be won on the basis of single community politics. It can only be won by people right across the world coming together. It can't be won on the Falls unless it is won on the Shankhill. If we can organise, and we can organise, it is a hugely popular campaign. Every survey shows 80 per cent plus of people willing to support a non-payment campaign. That sort of campaign with the trade union movement at the centre of it can have enormous implications for the future of all our politics. It will do more to bring people together in the North to give people a sense of themselves which it refers not to the community they come from but to the class that they belong to. If we can do that we will have defeated privatisation and we will have changed the atmosphere and the context in which we have to move forward in Northern Ireland. Support the non-payment campaign, insist that your individual unions not only give lip service to it but to do what NIPSA did and put resources and time and full time and energy into it. Every trade union branch in the North, it seems to me, should be an organising centre for the non-payment of water charges campaign if, as it appears very likely, the u-turn is completed and the parties on the Executive who campaigned against water charges when they were looking for votes and now not one of them, not one of them, will give a commitment not to introduce them and if we have to take them on lets take them on in an united working class way and change it forever.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Now, follow that.

Philip Cummings, FDA

Wow, that's a hard act to follow. Philip Cummings, FDA. Delegates, I am speaking to support Motion 46. Investment to provide safe drinking water and to treat sewage is both welcome and long overdue. Privatisation of those services is totally unacceptable and unwelcome, especially the proposed introduction of water charges. If implemented, households will be charged twice for water to pay for decades of underinvestment by the British Government. Privatisation in England has delivered more cash to shareholders than water to households. Privatisation and water charges will take money out of the pockets of our members to fill the coffers of the Treasury in London and line the pockets of shareholders. This is a unique opportunity for the trade union movement to lead

what would be a very popular campaign against water charges in both nationalist and unionist communities. It would demonstrate that the trade unions are still relevant in leading public opinion and ensuring that the new devolved administration at Stormont heeds the will of the people and our members. Please support the motions. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Any other speakers? Any rights of reply? Patricia.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON and Vice President of Congress

Patricia McKeown, UNISON, Conference, Vice President, I want to thank the General Secretary for giving me the opportunity to exercise the right of reply. I do want to make it crystal clear that we are of course strategic and we are pragmatists and paragraph 7 of this motion is very clear. We are not saying walk away from anything. We are saying commence work to change what is there at the minute. Now, I fully appreciate that it is incumbent on our movement to try and get the best protections and conditions for our people as possible and there is nothing in this motion that would seek to remove any of those protections. But I would make this point – the PFI school buildings programme in the North has stopped and it was stopped in the face of the will of Gordon Brown and the British Treasury and it was stopped exclusively by the campaigning of this movement. The second thing that has happened is the NHS, which was faced with years of contracting out, has now got only one outsource contract left and its coming back in-house next year. That's the long haul – that took 17 years but it is the proof that when this movement puts its money where its mouth is in the face of resisting privatisation we can succeed. And, I fully believe we can succeed on both side so the border and when I went to a joint ICTU seminar in Mullingar 18 months ago, I listened to local Government workers, trade unionists in the Republic who had been confronted with PPPs in water and sewage, they were in no doubt that little protection had been afforded to them because they were being privatised, and they were blaming us as well as the Government. We cannot afford to have that situation pertain any longer. It is the long haul, we might not get it changed tomorrow, we might not get it changed in the next 2 years but we have got to make a start.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Any other speakers or proposers exercising their right of reply?

Ok, we will move immediately to a vote on Motions 45-48. Motion No 45 – all in favour, against, abstentions. That's carried unanimously.

Motion No 46 - all in favour, against, abstentions. Carried unanimously.

Motion No 47 - all in favour, against, abstentions. That's unanimously carried as well.

Motion No 48 - all in favour, against, abstentions. All unanimously carried. Thank you very much delegates. Before moving on to Motion No 49, I would just like to remind any unions that haven't voted to hurry up and do so because the ballot boxes will be closing shortly, so if you haven't voted you should do so as soon as possible.

Ok, we move to Motion No 49 on the Services Directive. The TEEU motion, could I have a proposer please, and could I have some quiet in the hall please.

Jimmy Nolan, Technical, Electrical, Engineering Union

President, delegates, Jimmy Nolan, TEEU moving Motion 49. Delegates, a lot of the arguments around this Directive have been rehearsed over the last couple of days, so there are a lot of issues to raise which I don't intend to. But, however, in introducing this motion to the Conference, I want to quote from a manifesto written the century before last. However, I must change some of the wording to reflect today's historical context, and I quote. "A spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of neo-liberal capitalism, it has to change. The economic philosophy which is at the heart of this pernicious Directive allows no barriers to market forces. The Directive, if implemented, as initially intended which contains the so called "country of origin" principle, exempt foreign companies from the laws of the countries they operated in. This, of course, would have battered down minimum standards won at national level and conjured up a recipe for the privatisation of services on a massive scale. It would have forced opening public services to the privateers to pursue profit for profit sake. Not surprisingly this provoked huge trade union protests across Europe and following these protests, 400 amendments were presented to the European Parliament, including demands to remove all mention of "country of origin" principle and for health care, public transport and other social services to be removed from the Directive. At this point, I want to congratulate, as does our motion, our trade union centre for the significant role it played in bringing about these changes. The campaign demonstrated that it is possible to change the direction in which the EU is going and the position taken up by Irish Governments in Brussels. But significant as these changes are the fight is not over. To illustrate this point I will quote the EU Internal Market Commissioner, Charlie McCreevy, and I quote: "The Commission which produced this country of origin principle, which was removed from the final text of the Directive, will clearly return to it as a matter of course". From the above statement it would appear that other equally sinister alternative backdoor methods which have the potential to destroy workers' rights at EU level, are being contemplated. And, if and when they emerge, they will need to be vigourously opposed and defeated.

Delegates, we must be vigilant and vigours and we must closely monitor the transposition of this Directive into Irish law. We must ensure that Ireland includes provisions in the legislation to protect workers and public services. This will be necessary as the Directive allows but does not compel Governments to introduce these provisions. It is clear that we must continue to fight. We must stay focussed on this issue until acceptable Irish legislation is in place to protect our members against the excesses of neo-liberalism. Support the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Formerly seconded. Any speakers on Motion 49.

Edward Mathews, Irish Nurses Organisation.

Thank you Vice President. Edward Mathews, Irish Nurses Organisation speaking in support of Motion 49. The Services Directive and the country of origin principle are of great concern to us and were of great concern to us and remains so. The country of origin principle and the effects of it are well rehearsed and well voiced. However, I would also like to add a voice of caution in terms of services of general interest and services of general economic interest principles which are espoused in the European forum. We must ensure, colleagues, and we must keep an eye firmly on the European picture in terms of the affect that European regulation can have, could possible have, on the capacity of the Irish state or the Governments of this island to deliver for its citizens and we must, and I would urge you to again keep a firm eye from your individual unions and what is happening at a European level. The European Federation had a very successful campaign against the Services Directive but now that that has moved ahead and we have won the first battle, the battle is not over and you must keep an eye to ensure that further directives do no seek to erode the capacity of the state to deliver to its own citizens and does not allow services of general interests and what they now term services of general economic interest to fall into the hands of private industry. We must not fall victim of a definition which can seek

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

John, please, order.

Edward Mathews, Irish Nurses Organisation

Thank you Vice President. We must not fall victim of a system of definitions which allows law, or Treaties or Directives to rob us of our ability to serve our own citizens. I urge you to support the motion, thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Please delegates don't engage in conversations that we can all hear above the speaker. Thanks. Do I have any other speakers on the Services Directive motion, No 49? If not we will proceed immediately to vote.

Can I have all those in favour of Motion 49, against, abstentions. That's carried unanimously. We will proceed now to Motion No 50 on the Establishment of a Transport Authority.

Maureen Sneed, Transport Salaried Staff Association

Vice President, Congress, Comrades, Maureen Sneed, TSSA - the establishment of a Transport Authorities North and South of Ireland. Now that the 2007 General Election has concluded and a new Minister for Transport and Marine, Noel Dempsey, TD has been appointed by the Taoiseach, it is clear that the report submitted to his predecessor, Martin Cullen in March of last years by the Dublin Transportation Authority Establishment Team would need to be formally and fully considered and reacted to by Congress in respect of those unions, trade union members who make suffer as a consequence of the implementation of the proposals in that report. Insofar as TSSA is concerned, our Irish Committee has not adopted a negative disposition insofar as the concept of a new central authority and regulator for transport in the greater Dublin transport area is concerned, although we have argued that the CIE holding company should be the regulatory body. In that respect Conference should note that the proposed authority's principal function as outlined in the report include transport planning, infrastructure, services and fares, delivery of an integrated system, traffic management, demand management, data collection and research and land usage. While the report recommends that a complete takeover of all and every aspect of the public transport by the authority is not the preferred option, the document does nevertheless recommend that the DTA will have the authority to procure bus and rail services on the long distance commuting corridors into Dublin city. As a consequence of this, the CIE Group of Companies will be left in situ merely to provide the bus and rail services specified by the authority whereas the future provision of the Luas and the planned Metro services will be procured through a competitive tendering system. The RPA will eventually be absorbed into a new authority which will take over direct responsibility of three landmark rail projects: Metro North Rail Line, Dublin City interconnector and the construction of an integrated transfer facility at Stephen's Green, integrated ticketing and the procurement of the public transport services. It is significant for TSSA members that this report recommends the oversight of public transport operations in the greater Dublin area by the three operating subsidiaries of CIE will become the responsibility of the new Transport Authority rather than as before that of the CIE holding company. The consequence of this imposition is that the role of the CIE holding company will be overtaken and therefore the company and the employment it provides will in effect be subsumed

by the new authority. The implications arising for our members employed in the CIE company are unquestionably more serious and also jobs in the CIE operating companies, I'm conscious of the time so I will just move on.

Our concerns include, but are not confined to, the protection of the CIE 1951 Pension Scheme, no involuntary redundancies, application of the TUPE regulations, any transfer to new employers being voluntary and the protection under the provisions of section 40 and sub-section 7 of the Transport Reorganisation of CIE Act of 1986. I am taking the opportunity here to point out to delegates that a similarly structuring of fundamentals of public transport in Northern Ireland has been proposed. A new Passenger Transport Authority is to be introduced and there is no doubt a major threat of this new body will descend on TSSA members in Northern Ireland. It is the members of TSSA who will, largely speaking, be affected in terms of their jobs and future employment by the introduction of these new bodies. I am asking Conference, therefore, for the support of all delegates in carrying this motion which is of paramount importance to my union but also to the other trade unions that are working within the CIE holding company and the operating companies and also by supporting this motion in ensuring that ICTU is represented on the authorities. Please support, I move.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Maureen. Do we have a seconder for the motion? Do we have a seconder? Is it being formally seconded? Thank you. Any speakers on this Motion? Brendan.

Brendan Hayes, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

President, Brendan Hayes, SIPTU. I will be very brief speaking in support of the resolution. My union is not opposed to an integrated Transport Authority. Indeed anybody who is would be probably described as "mad". But we are afraid of what it could become. We have experience in other semi-state companies where promises that were given to us when certain proposals were made by Government were not followed through on. Government swore a hole in a thin bucket that there would be not bid by Ryan Air for Aer Lingus when it was privatised. It was only a matter of days after the privatisation that Ryan Air made the bid. We are now being told that the Transport Authority represents no threat to CIE. We have to wait and see what is contained in the legislation but what we fear doesn't arguer well. We know for instance that it is possible that the legislation will contain a provision that will enable the Transport Authority to prosecute CIE Executives if they look after the interests of their company, their customers and their workers and refuse to carry out instructions from the Transport Authority that is now proposed. If the proposition is that the Transport Authority would become a mechanism by which the Government will have plausible liability. Give it a mandate and effectively tell it to privatise public

transport services in this state, well then that is not acceptable to our union and it should be condemned by this Conference.

We are very concerned that the Transport Authority, as proposed, could well end up doing nothing more than becoming the agent of privatisation, threatening our members' pay, conditions and pensions. If, however, the proposition is that the Transport Authority will do more than that, if it is that it will do something different to that, if it is that will saucer, encourage, develop and invest in public transport then my union will support it but we will wait and see. Thank you very much.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you Brendan. Any further speakers on Motion No 50. You don't want to come back? No, so we will proceed to a vote immediately on Motion 50.

All those in favour, against, abstentions. That's carried unanimously.

Delegates, I now have great pleasure in introducing to you the General Secretary of the TUC, Brendan Barber who is now going to address the Conference. Brendan, you are very welcome.

Fraternal Address Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the TUC

Vice President, many thanks indeed for those words of welcome and I'm delighted to be with you at Conference and to bring greetings and solidarity on behalf of the TUC. Well, this has certainly been a momentous year. On March 26, agreement on power sharing in Northern Ireland was finally reached. A breakthrough whose significance cannot be understated, offering at long last the prospect of peace and prosperity for everyone on the island of Ireland. Let's not forget the historical events of February 24 at Croke Park. Something which did affect millions of people, a seismic shift in the balance of power, Ireland 43, England 13. And, finally of course, this year has seen major changes to the Governments of both islands and the United Kingdom, though unlike you we didn't feel it necessary to bother with the inconvenience of a General Election.

Let me begin by saying how much the TUC values our relationship with the ICTU. Not only do we share both affiliates and membership but a common outlook too. And, I know that in David trade union members here in Ireland have a powerful and effective voice, a respected colleague within the European trade union and wider international movement, a real champion for working people whatever their background, whatever their country of origin and whatever their employment status. And there can be no doubt that this is a critical time for ordinary working people. On both sides of the Irish sea workers and their unions face strikingly similar challenges. Public service reforms that raise concerns

about creeping privatisation, especially in the health service. Pressure on pensions with a significant proportion of the workforce lacking adequate provision. Insecurity brought about by globalisation underlined the urgent need to invest in life longer learning for all.

Now, Britain like Ireland, has been one of the economic success stories of the past decade but like here large sways of the population have yet to benefit from this new prosperity. As the economies of our two countries have grown so too has inequality. The gulf between rich and poor has got wider. The gender pay gap remains a persistent problem. And, those at the bottom of our labour market still suffer exploitation, maltreatment and poverty pay. That why our struggle for employment rights must go on. What happened in Irish Ferries less than two years ago underlines the need for action. I know you have made some progress since then and that's to be welcomed but much remains to be done.

What a tragedy it is that of all the countries in the European Union, only Britain, Ireland and Hungary see fit to deny basic employment rights to agency workers. That is simply unacceptable. It is a key priority for TUC campaigning and I think none of us will rest or ought to rest until this shameful anomaly is put right. If the European Union and the European Union labour market get larger, the driving philosophy must be to level up the rights of workers not reduce everyone to the lowest common denominator. That is why the TUC was bitterly disappointed when the United Kingdom Government negotiated an "opt-out" from the Charter of Fundamental Rights at last month's European Union's summit. We face the frankly ludicrous situation that the Charter will cover workers here in the Republic but not those North of the border. If Bertie Aherne and the leaders of every other European Union state can commit to the values espoused by that Charter, then so should Gordon Brown. And the case for harmonising rights is even more compelling at a time of unprecedented labour migration. In the United Kingdom today, one in twenty of the workforce are migrant workers. I think the calculation is that here in Ireland one in ten. And I believe that Britain has much to learn from this country's response to migration. As part of your social partner agreement *Towards 2016*, you have restated your commitment to an open labour market but only when underpinned by a stronger framework of rights and more rigorous enforcement of those rights. Creating a level playing field for all workers so that migrant workers cannot be exploited and indigenous labour cannot be undercut. Not just the best way of securing fairness but also the most effective way of preserving social cohesion and that's got to be the way forward also in the UK. And that is why the TUC is looking to bring a delegation to Ireland, of trade unionists, business leaders and Government representatives to learn from your experience. One thing's for sure – that as the pace of globalisation intensifies, and migration accelerates in its slip stream, we must do all we can to resist a race to the bottom where workers are pitted against one another, where basic rights are seen as a burden on business where people come second to profits. So those politicians and business leaders whose instinct is for deregulation and flexibility, let me say this; that the only way we can compete in the global

economy is by raising standards not lowering costs and investing in the talents of all workers, leading the way on skills and innovation. And, I believe indeed that the greatest political challenge of our age, whether here in Ireland, the UK or elsewhere, is to demonstrate that we can make globalisation work for ordinary working people to give everyone a stake in the global economy, to ensure that it's the many not the few who share in its benefits. And our movement has to lead from the front showing the high standards and high performance at two side of the same coin. More than that we must rebuild our organisation for those who need it most because it is only through our collective strength that we can win for the people. We are increasingly expected to do more for less. To work longer hours and suffer less job security, to bend over backwards to be flexible yet see pensions trimmed back. To endure meagre pay raises yet watch the top bosses rake it in. In Ireland, Britain and across the world, workers are waiting for the pendulum to swing the other way. They want fairness, justice and security at work. And, that is what you are aiming to deliver, us too and the closer we work together, the more powerful our efforts will prove to be.

Thanks very much for listening, good luck in all your work.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you very much indeed, Brendan, that was very inspiring, thank you.

We go back now delegates to the motions and I would ask the movers of Motions 51 onwards to start coming up.

Motion No 51 on the White Paper on Energy. Do I have a mover?

Fran O'Neill, Electricity Supply Board Officers' Association

Delegates, Fran O'Neill, ESBOA, to move Motion 51, the White Paper on Energy. This long awaited White Paper on Energy was to address actions for security of supply and sustainability of that supply and use of the market and enhance competitiveness in the market place. The Minister's proposals, we were also assured, was to support the ESB's giving it's vital role in the economy. To provide a strong environment for the ESB and indeed promote it as a national champion. The analysis so of the effect of the proposals impacting on the ESB in the White Paper is that it will result in the fragmentation of the ESB. We would see a significant transfer of assets both in terms of general transmission assets and indeed generation assets from the public sector to the private sector which would have the effect of disabling the ESB as a competitive service provider. And none of this would be achieved providing any benefit to ESB customers, particularly domestic customers in terms of price or service. And, funny enough colleagues, in the White Paper proposals, while the ESB will build and operate a new modern efficient plant, generation plant, gas fired in Aghada, ESB domestic customers will be prohibited from receiving the benefit of that as being the cheapest electricity being available in the Republic at that point and time. My

analysis obvious alone is shared by General Secretary of the ICTU as he spoke yesterday but funnily enough it is also the view of the former Minister Dempsey, who at launching the Green Paper discussions, said that the Government did not have any circumstances of favouring the break up and fragmentation of the ESB. And, on behalf of the Government he stated that we believe that such a move would not reduce prices but in fact would increase them and endanger our security of supply and our competitiveness. Notwithstanding that the Minister then proceeded to propose the implementation of such changes. The ESBOA, colleagues, are totally opposed and will resist the implementation of these proposals in the White Paper. I believe that is a view that is shared by all our sister unions in the ESB and I would call on the new Minister at this point to engage with the group of unions in the ESB in discussions and withdraw these ludicrous proposals and I would ask for your support to achieve that, thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Do we have a seconder for Motion 51?

David Naughton, Technical, Engineering and Electrical Union

Thank you. David Naughton, Technical, Engineering and Electrical Union. I wish to second the motion.

The proposal before you deals with a White Paper and the White Paper is comprehensive and covers the whole industry and there are many good aspects in the paper and it should create stability within the industry, so it is welcome from that point of view. There are elements, indeed a number of elements that are not practical and are not an advantage to either workers or the people of Ireland generally or of the state, or to the ESB as a profitable, commercial semi-state. It contributes nearly 70 million into the state coffers. Some of the aspects are impractical and I wish to go through them. The very first speaker at this conference made a point that teachers didn't necessarily understand the civil servants and the civil servants didn't necessarily. So for the few minutes I have I will attempt to put it into a context that maybe all delegates will understand.

The proposal that is there – if people bear in mind that all of the trade union movement over the last couple of years – there were two major campaigns. One was in relation to the Irish Glass and Bottle company where the assets of a company turned out to be more valuable than the workers and a profitable company was closed just so that the company could avail of the assets, the assets being the land. Unfortunately, while that campaign may have been successful for the people in Irish Glass and Bottle Company, and improved redundancies for all workers at the time. The same things seem to be happening now in Ballsbridge where the value of assets seems to be more beneficial than a couple of hundred jobs in what is a profitable industry. Irish Ferries was the other campaign and Irish Ferries related to the displacement of workers, which all of

the trade union movement along with the vast majority of the public in the country supported.

The White Paper in relation to the ESB proposes the transfer of one billion worth of assets – that's merely the value of the assets – it may not necessarily be the commercial value of its entire commercial operation, from one state company to another. And the formal position of Minister Dempsey when he was asked, was that the asset would transfer from one company to another and because it was a state company it didn't matter. When he was asked in relation to the staff who works in the assets, his attitude was that the staff would not be transferred. So you were talking about the transferring of an asset for not any reasons but for the optics for the industry and the displacement of somewhere between 300 and 500 staff. When the Chief Executive of the receiving company, Mr Dermot Byrne, was asked what would happen, his was that the staff who were in permanent pensionable jobs his preference would be that that they would be his preferred contractors so that the Minister's proposals is talking about the transfer of assets and the displacement of workers. The same is applicable to the lands. Exactly what is happening with public land being used for private hospitals – it is being proposed that public land that is in state ownership be used for private generation and that should be apparent to all delegates as in the case of hospitals and I would ask on that basis that the motion be supported.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Thank you. Do we have any speakers?

John Ryder, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union, UNITE

Thank you. John Ryder, ATGWU, Unite supporting the motion. Comrades, the Social Partnership agreement requires all parties to the agreement to be advised at an early stage of any policy proposals with regard to semi-states. In the case of the White Paper on Energy, this did simply not happen. When the process was at its consultative Green Paper stage, the then Minister, Mr Noel Dempsey, at a meeting with the ESB Group of Unions, assured us that it is not his intention to privatise the ESB. Furthermore, he added it would simply just not make sense to breakup or fragment such a successful and public service company such as the ESB. Indeed, he referred to the company as a 'National Champion'. Subsequently these assurances were also related to the management of the ESB who were further assured that there would be no surprises contained in the White Paper. Well, comrades, you can imagine the surprise and dismay felt by all when the very proposals he told us wouldn't be included in fact actually formed the foundation of the paper. This can only be viewed as a stab in the back for the unions and the company. It's clearly a two-fingered salute to the shared understanding of what is required under Social Partnership. Indeed one journalist referred it to me yesterday that we were all double crossed by the Minister. It is also interesting to note that the only issue thus far to have ignited

the debate and somewhat benign, going through the motions albeit very slowly. As an esteemed delegate said the 'elephant in the room' that is Social Partnership. An issue that induced a flurry to the platform demanding the right to respond from some of our most revered and esteemed delegates. Indeed, in his own address our Socialist Taoiseach, continued the robust defence of the Social Partnership agreement. So passionate a defence that he found himself in a bit of bother for describing what would be his alternative. I wonder comrades how the Taoiseach's expressed preferred opinion on such a solid agreement on partnership rests with his own Minister's view on agreement as expressed by him to the ESB Group of Unions after we met him following the publication of the White Paper. When questioned on such agreements, Mr Dempsey's response was, and I quote: "Agreements don't last forever, this is a new day". However, comrades, I was given heart and resolve by an excellent response by David Begg to the Taoiseach with reference to the fragmentation of the ESB. I hope his address is an indication of ICTU to support the unions involved in this fight to maintain a vertically integrated utility and change Government thinking on such ill-thought out Government proposals. I sincerely hope that ICTU's contribution is not simply whether to have a debate on the pros and cons of whether to have nuclear energy. We all must keep an eye on the real game comrades and defeat these damaging and unnecessary proposals. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Do we have any other speakers on this motion? Brendan.

Brendan Hayes, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

President, delegates, Brendan Hayes, SIPTU speaking to this resolution and if I could make reference to the following resolutions as well so that I don't take up any more time.

We welcome the White Paper on Energy, we think it is time that we had a proper debate and a proper discussion about how we supply our energy needs. We think there is an element of cowardice in the way in which the White Paper avoids the issue of nuclear power and I think it is a tribute to Jerry Shanahan that he has put that debate firmly back on the table. Now, my union would have traditionally opposed nuclear power and I believe if we had a conference again we would oppose it again. However, those decisions were made in the 1970s and 1980s. Time has moved on and it is up to this generation to address the issues that faces this generation and one of those issues is how we are going to supply our energy needs into the future. And, I think its lamentable that when we came to discuss the fundamental issue of energy supply in this state we failed to address the issue of nuclear power and my union will be supporting the resolution on that.

In relation to the ESB I suspect that the reason that nuclear power was avoided is because the real aim of the White Paper on Energy had very little to do with addressing our energy needs in the medium to long term and had more to do with addressing the needs of private capital in relation to access to the energy market and the breaking up of the ESB. We don't see that there is any merit in the opposition to break up the ESB from the vertically integrated company that it is at the moment. No business case has been made, no consumer case has been made, no financial case has been made and no engineering case has been made. The only case that is being made for the break up of the ESB is to ensure that the private sector gets access to a very profitable area of business – the supply of electricity. We suspect that the real purpose and we have seen over the last number of years that the energy regulator raised the price of electricity in order to attract in competition. Having made the mistake with eircom having privatised the network we suspect that what they really are about now is maintaining the network in public ownership and privatising the rest of the service. We'll not stand for that and nor should you. Support the motion.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President Congress

Any other speakers? I am not encouraging other speakers but are there any? Ok, we go straight to a vote on Motion No. 51. All those in favour, against, abstentions. That is carried unanimously and I now have the great pleasure of handing the chair back to the President.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Apologies to the speakers here onwards but we are 15 minutes into the session on Education so I am going to ask for Conference to agree that we defer these motions until later in the Conference. We can start the debate on Education so I will ask the movers of Motions 55 up to 64 to come forward and before closing the debate on this section, can I ask for the adoption of EC Report on the Economy, Section 5. Is that agreed? Sorry, I can't take you from there. If there is a point of order you will have to come forward and raise it but I am operating within the Standing Orders Report that has been adopted, ok? So we are going to have leave the motions after 52 until later in the Conference.

Unidentified Speaker, Waterford Council of Trade Unions

President, I am asking that Motion 53 be debated here today. It is a very important debate and Congress has been calling for that debate. If it is not taken today when is it going to be taken – another two years time possibly or when ever or who is going to make a decision in terms, this is supposed to be a decision making body of the trade union movement in Ireland as I understand it and as the Waterford Council of Trade Unions understand it and there is a national debate after being kicked off and the trade union movement is seen as being a big part of calling for that. And, for us not to have that debate here today

is a wasted opportunity and I just wonder why there has been a call for a debate and it is being stifled here today.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Sorry, its not really a point of order. It is a request that Standing Orders will seek to accommodate a discussion on these motions later today and I will put that request to Standing Orders and come back to you after lunch. Then in accordance with Standing Orders that we have already adopted, we should have moved to Education at 12 O'Clock and we are now 15 minutes into this. My only comment, and we have no interest in getting into a hassle with the delegates but every delegate who has overstepped the mark in relation to the three minutes and the two minutes is eating into the time of other speakers and that what we are dealing with is as a consequence of that. So I would ask you to leave it and we will come back to you after lunch with a report from Standing Orders. Ok.

Can I now invite the mover of Motion 55 to please come forward.

John Martin, Fermanagh Trades Council

Conference, President, John Martin to move Motion 55 on behalf of Fermanagh Trades Council. Over this past three years there has been a steady stream of migrants and their families coming to work in factories and other industries in the island of Ireland. This new influx of mainly Eastern European migrants and their families is the biggest ever seen in memory. This has thrown up many problems in many areas North and South, and some Irish people are now beginning to see the new communities as a potential threat to their jobs, community and way of life. This presents a real challenge to all of us in the trade union movement. Issues such as how to provide jobs, housing, schooling and facilities to help integrate the new communities into our country and at the same time work to reassure the local community of the need and deservability of such developments is at the heart of that challenge.

In Fermanagh issues relating to migrants concerning working conditions and housing problems have started to come to light to local trade unionists working in factories along side migrant workers. Many of the migrant workers seem afraid or reluctant to join trade unions that would help to protect them. They are unaware of their rights when it came to dealing with landlords or employers. As a direct result of this concern, the Fermanagh Trade Union's diversity project was formed. This initiative was made up of the Transport & General Workers Union, Education Partnership, which includes the Enniskillen Community Development Project and the Fermanagh Council of Trade Unions. It has been working with the local migrant economic strategy to help the migrant community locally by providing practical help with English classes.

At the time of writing this motion, it was widely believed in Northern Ireland that funding for these classes, DSOL classes, would be cut. Thankfully this is now not to be the case. However, the need for additional funding for English classes, workers rights classes and welfare rights classes is paramount and a structured plan is needed to help migrants to get more successful in more parts of this island of Ireland. What we have achieved in Fermanagh is a small example of how best to break down barriers and to assist the new communities interface with the local people. I applaud the decision of Congress to employ a migrant worker co-ordinator and look forward to working with the new appointee in the not too distant future. I move.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Can I have a formal seconder for it. Formally seconded, ok.

Can I invite the mover of 56.

Evelina Savuikyte, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

President, delegates, conference, language is the single largest barrier to community relations. Here in Ireland if someone doesn't speak English – we will forget about Gaelige for the moment, then something as basic as shopping for groceries can be a bit of a nightmare. If the worker cannot speak English then he can't argue with his employer. Even if he is lucky enough to know his rights the employer can very easily exploit him. Workers who want to improve their skills and with it their earnings and who want to integrate into the community and the workplace, want to act on public services and avail of opportunities for further education must be able to communicate in English. Even the key role immigration now plays in the tax system of the Irish economy and the importance of reducing concerns about immigrants, I am glad to see that the programme for Government at least plans to increase the number of language teachers and to provide access to English language classes for adult immigrants. But, as employers benefit most from migration, then business also needs to do their bit to help migrant workers by meeting the cost of English classes. Communications leads the community. When we learn the language of people we learn about the culture and how they think and we can become part of that community much faster. The inability to communicate effectively can lead to a path of isolation and separation. I found companies with high levels of migrant workers who only have basic English and because of that, workers there gather in groups by nationality. When companies did not make any effort to teach them English, this situation can easily lead to racist tensions amongst workers. Proper communication will minimise tension and frustration which arise from improper understanding. Government should pressurise companies for education of migrant workers. Through better education we can help migrant workers plan an active part in trade unions as well as playing an active part in their community, which in turn benefits society as a whole. I support the motion. Dziekuje.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Apologies, I didn't realise you were coming forward to seconding Motion 55. Is there another speaker on 55, please come forward.

Daniel Konieczny, UNISON

I do not have good English but I try my best. Daniel Konieczny, UNISON. Conference, migrant workers who come to this island want to work. They want to integrate with local communities. Some may even want to stay but most will return to their home country. For those workers who don't have good English, like me, it can be very difficult. They are limited in what types of jobs they can get. They are unable to access information on their work rights, on health care too and on immigration issues. They can't ask for help. They are less able to make friends with people from this island because they can't communicate with them. This causes migrant workers to socialise only with each other and can cause communities to develop which can be supportive but also can be exclusive. Helping migrant workers to access English courses can change their lives for the better. It helps them to contribute more to society, to have more independence and helps them to get to know local people on a personal level and for them to get to know us. Currently English classes in Northern Ireland, the further educational colleges are subsidised, sorry my English, but they are still often too expensive. A trade union led English language programme would be a positive step to supporting migrant workers across this island to realise their own potential and realise what they can give to the society. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Thank you very much colleague. I must say your command of the English language was very impressive but your ability to operate within the time limits should be an example to all.

If there is no other speakers on 55, if you would like to come forward and move Motion 56 please.

Mike Jennings, Irish Federation of University Teachers

Thank you Chairman, Mike Jennings from the Irish Federation of University Teachers moving Motion 56. Firstly, Chairman, can I just say that many people might still wonder whether academic freedom and academic diversity is in fact a trade union issue, can I just say that remember that its the tax our members pay which pays for the education system. What happens within those education institutions is our business, we have paid for it and we have a right to get the

service. Always remember that. We should never be intimidated from having our voice in that area.

Now, unfortunately in the past and to some degree still today there has been a kind of an anti-intellectualism within the trade union movement. I remember when I started as a full-time official I often wondered if the people of County Clare wondered had I spent five or six years in jail because I was too embarrassed to admit that I'd spent some time in university. I thought that my credentials as a worker representative would be undermined. And, we often here of people almost boasting about having left school at the age of 14. I don't think that the reaction should be to be proud of it. I think the reaction should be to be angry that working class people were forced out of education while the children of the rich were able to access it. And, I firmly believe that somebody who does leave school at 14 has every right to be proud of their achievements despite that fact but still to be angry. Neil Kinnock in one of his flowery speeches mentioned that he was the first Kinnock in a thousand generations to attend university because the British Labour Government had introduced access policies and free fees. I and people of my age were the first generation who benefited from free second level education and as a result many of my contemporaries went on to finish the leaving cert which they otherwise would not have been able to afford to do and went into colleges. Subsequently in this jurisdiction in the Republic of Ireland a Labour Party Minister introduced the abolition of third level fees. And, as a result we currently have the highest participation rates in third levels that we have ever had in our history and you would imagine that that would be unequivocally welcomed as a good thing. But, it seems to me, delegates, that there are some people who hanker after the old days when the working class knew their place and they don't like the idea of mass participation in third level. And, these are the same people who have always believed that education as a commodity that you buy – if you have the cash you buy it and if you don't you do without. And it seems to me that the response to mass participation is to say that if we are going to let ordinary people into education, then the only sort of education we give them is the sort of education that would benefit directly multi-national companies and the economy. Now it is undeniable that education is a major driver and a major factor in economic progress. But, education is much more than that and it is true to say that it is much more than that. Education should open up the mind, good education shouldn't simply be to create a mind and create skills for exploitation by profit takers and I believe, and my union believes, my union believes that all of the resources and all of the treasury of human knowledge and achievement belongs to all of us, it doesn't belong to an elite and it is wrong to narrow the choices for people simply because there has been a participation in education. A well educated population possibly will have the skills to do what needs to be done in society, but a well educated population will have diversity of academic studies will be able to invent the skills that today we don't even realise that we need and will need.

I will finish on this Chairman, can I just say that the very people who are presiding over the narrowing of education opportunities, heads of universities, have a record which I believe is shameful. They don't see themselves as being the guardians of this major resource which belongs to all of us. They explicitly describe themselves as Chief Executive Officers of corporations. That is the way they see it. I think that is disgraceful and it is interesting that they behave like Chief Executive Officers because in the last year we had a spectacle when the heads of Irish universities seeking a 150 per cent pay increase while at the same time, member of my union were being threatened with no pay increase because they hadn't fully complied with spurious action plans. That is the sort of challenge that we face. Finally, we should always remember that this gathering is effectively it seems to me, the Parliament of Ireland's working people. This is the largest Conference gathering to represent the views of working people and we should say quite clearly, a diverse and real education system is the birthright of our children and we shouldn't tolerate those forces who are trying to take it away from us. I ask you to support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Formal seconder for 56. Paddy.

Paddy Healy, Teachers Union of Ireland

Paddy Healy, TUI seconding the motion. There is widespread concern through the education sector and through the third level sector that this motion addresses. There is widespread concern at the damage being done to the whole fabric of education by what an earlier delegate called the neo-liberal spectre which is not just haunting Europe but which is haunting the world. There is a widespread concern not only among trade union activists but among people. Anyone who values education, the development of human knowledge and enrichment of human culture, a fostering of critical thought and the provision of well researched backed views and indeed competing views to society so that fully democratic decisions can be taken. Where is this coming from? It is coming from the World Trade talks, its coming from the EU Commission, its coming from the OECD, which is not an independent research organisation but a neo-liberal think-tank, public servants please note, and what are the consequences of that? Resources are being stripped out of teaching, the teaching of students, to market release activities. The chair of old Irish at UCD was abolished, drama studies in Trinity, women's rights in Galway and in the Institute of Technology sector we had to fight an All-Ireland battle to keep resources in the teaching of music itself. That is the sort of thing that is going on as well of large numbers of young people, 3,000 on fixed purpose contracts who are now streaming out of research, are doing 80 per cent of all the research in Irish universities, who have no continuity of employment and are now streaming out to desk jobs because they cannot either get mortgages nor pay mortgages when they want to set up a household. So the situation, this business model that is being applied to

education and for which ultimately the Department of Education and the Government are responsible, is doing untold damage to Irish education, to the whole fabric of Irish learning and scholarship and doing very, very serious disservice to our members who are being asked to do completely impossible tasks and to the many, many causal workers in education, in third level who are being treated in a grossly unfair fashion. We support the motion thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Any other speakers on 56? Yes.

Jack McGinley, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

President, Jack McGinley, SIPTU. Comrades, I have come to support this IFUT motion against the background of 33 years working and as an administrative support worker and an ICTU nominated board member in Ireland's premier university Trinity College which ranks 74th amongst the world's finest university college. However, the views from the world of further and higher education is not good. As with all public services, the public purse has underfunded the core grants and has not kept pace with the expansion of under-graduate numbers encompassing more access to mature students, those with disabilities and a move towards a knowledge society and a fourth level academic programme. This underfunding must be addressed now, otherwise irreparable damage will be done to the reputation to Irish higher education and its constituent institutions. Recent restructurings in our universities and the businessification of our universities have led to an erosion of the broad curriculum and the controversy engendered cutting the study courses in UCD ***End of Tape missing.***

Tape missing for proposer of Motion 57 – Margaret Duignam, Teachers Union of Ireland

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

When people are running over time there are doing it in full minutes and two minutes so please keep an eye to the clock in fairness to the other speakers.

John McGowan, Teachers Union of Ireland

John McGowan, TUI seconding the motion. I want to point out that this motion does not seek coerce or corral the disaffected and there are students, children who are disaffected, many of them with very, very good reason because they live their lives in what Ireland cease to acknowledge, quite frankly, in abject poverty. And what they do in schools reflects the experience that they bring to schools. It is inevitably so. But this motion looks for support. It frequently mentions the word 'support'. It attempts to be humane and humanity in this, or humaneness in this case, can be expressed very simply by the motivating principle that forms our

policy, which is that each and every child has an entitlement to a high quality, free publicly fund education in a local school in the company of his sibling or siblings, friends and neighbours. Now, that might seem eminently achievable even enormously cost effective but unfortunately we are not in a position currently to say that we have achieved it. This seeks various supports – I am not going to repeat what is asked for. It also focuses on quality. We don't just want to keep children in seat listening to adults drone on. We want to provide an appropriate curriculum of the highest quality and appropriateness in this case means appropriate to the individual needs of the child not some generalised notion of appropriateness. What else do we wish to do? We wish to be able to perform the functions that we have as teachers according to the best methodologies and the best ideologies available to us, and we therefore require training and we require the support of other professionals. We ask for that. What do we get instead? We get instead a Department that is absolutely smoothed by its own incoherence. And that incoherence is born from a very deep rooted conservatism. Where they should be supporting they instead invoke a granges notice of parental choice to allow segregation by parents based on fear of parents. A fear that they won't get the best in their local school. We have departments that fund segregation rather than funding integration and education with the local community. We also would ask that you understand that in putting forward this motion we are asking for expenditure, real serious expenditure of money and we see that it would be very well used if directed in the areas indicated here. Please support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Thank you. Are there any other speakers on 57, if not can I ask the mover of 58 on Class Size to come forward, thank you.

Mike Freeley, Association of Secondary School Teachers

Mike Freeley, ASTI, Uachtaráin a dhuine usaile, be mhaith lom ruan caoige eocht a moladh. We are asking Congress as a matter of urgency to call on the Government to reduce class size in second level schools. After many years of unprecedented economic growth and enormous wealth, Ireland comes 29th out of 30 OECD countries when it comes to annual expenditure per second level student relative to GDP per capita. There has been no improvement in the pupil teacher ratio since 1999. Classes of 30 students are very common and to make things even worse, those classes include special needs students, students from international countries – immigrant students I suppose we call them anymore, and also students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is now 40 years since the late Donnach O'Malley reshaped our nation with his great vision to provide free education and travel. Minister Hanifin must reignite that vision with positive measures and more committed resources. I recognise that in the Programme for Government there is a commitment to reductions in class size in the core subjects of Irish, English and Maths but that is not enough. The Government

must reduce the pupil teacher ratio if we are to enhance and enrich our inclusive system which takes in all the different groups. In a wealthy country like Ireland, it really saddens me to think that families like the McNabs, O'Culacháins and the Sinnots have to take the legal route to vindicate their rights to receive an education for their children. It is immoral to think that the Government has spent large amounts of money, millions of euro in defending these cases in the courts against those families, where that money could be much better spent when providing more resources and support for special needs children. Large class size is adding enormously to the problems in our schools. I urge you, delegates, to put the dignity of the students at the heart of the system so that these students can reach his or her potential. I move this motion. Go raith maith agat Uachtaráin.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

To second?

Patricia Roe, Association of Secondary School Teachers

Patricia Roe, ASTI. Do you think the school place is the same as when you were at school? Our fraternal delegate from the TUC talked about the rights of workers in an open market. Through lack of funding and provision of resources, Government is guilty of exploitation and neglect of our education system and the student within it. Many of our students are being programmed to become second class citizens. Schools are expected today to meet the needs of society and everybody here will agree that it is far more complex than 10 or 15 years ago. In the nineties a survey was undertaken by the Professor of Education in Maynooth among many second level students and what found was that the thing that most students said was that what they appreciated most was that their emotional needs were being met at the school when they very often weren't being met anywhere else. If you are here in a Maths class, you have a one in two chance in a class of over 25 and if you are not, the person on your left and right is. If you are in a class of 30+, in an average 40 minute period the teacher has just over one minute with you as an individual. When you put into the equation the fact that children today are far more complex than they were 10 or 15 years ago, and that the class structure is far more complicated because of the needs of students and the fact that we have many students who do not understand the language properly in which the class is being conducted, nor will understand the culture in which they live. Their needs are not being met. And, it is farcical to assume that they are. Could I just suggest to you as a final point that if the house next door to you was told that its three bedrooms were to accommodate the five that live there but that the nine that are going to come, and by the way, no extra milk can be provided either, you would shudder. If it happened to you, you would be distraught. Many of our schools are finding that they are trying to provide what we need schools to provide with no proper resources and the Taoiseach yesterday mentioned that he was going to have the OECD look at

public services. Well, they have already looked at education and found that what we are providing is 29th out of 30 in terms of resources. Please support the motion, thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

If there is no other speaker on 58, can I invite the mover of 59 to come forward. Is there a speaker on 58, ok, sorry, can I, are you speaking on 58? Yes. Sorry, are there more speakers on 58 after that, yes.

Tim O'Meara, Teachers Union of Ireland

Tim O'Meara, Teachers Union of Ireland. The Teachers Union of Ireland fully support Motion 58. A strong measure of a country's commitment to the improving the life chance of all its citizens is how it invests in education. We all know that educational disadvantage only affects the poor because those people with money can afford access what they need, the support services they need by paying for it. And this is unacceptable. In the class rooms of this country teachers have to address on a daily basis the fall out of investment in public service education. Ireland, for its shame, spends less on education than most other developed countries. Recent figures show that Ireland spends nearly one thousand euro per student less than the average spend in the original EU countries and a staggering two thousand euro per student less than they spend in Denmark. Ireland is enjoying unprecedented prosperity. Much of this prosperity is due to investment in education by earlier and poorer generations. It is unacceptable that when we now have the money we chose this time to pull back from completing the development of the Irish educational system. If we want to pass on a worthwhile educational system to the next generation, then we must properly resource our public educational system. It is ironic while the Government says that schools must adapt to meet the pressing needs of an ever diverse and demanding student cohort, they equally fail to resource the schools to implement those adaptations. The major resource required is additional teachers deployed in a strategic targeted way in those areas and schools where students needs and societal inequalities are most acute. It is beyond doubt that smaller class sizes are essential if the blight of educational and socio-economic disadvantage is to be tackled. Similarly it is vital that class sizes are reduced to enable schools to provide an appropriate high quality education to the increasing number of students with special needs and to increasing number of international students now enhancing our schools. The Government talks about promoting inclusion in our schools. However, we wonder when they will act. We wonder when they will move from pious aspirations to constructive intervention. The Teachers Union of Ireland urge you to support Motion 58.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Are there further speakers on 58, yes.

Susie Hall, Association of Secondary School Teachers

Susie Hall, ASTI. I would like to support this motion and indeed I was delighted to see this one proposed also. When I started teaching, which predates some of the other speakers, there was of course no free second level education, it was just beginning to come on stream but the number of students per teacher was three fewer than it is now. The pupil teacher ratio was better by three per teacher than it is now. That was at the end of the sixties. After that recessions gave Government the excuse to say that we had to pack more children into the classrooms because we couldn't fund a proper education system. Those days have long gone. We have increase and increasing prosperity and yet the children are not being placed as a priority. The greed and ever increasing drive for productivity is preventing children from getting the attention and the time of their teachers that they so desperately need. At the time when I joined the education service, children with special needs were not mainstreamed and we did not have any significant numbers of students from abroad. I teach in the largest school in Dublin. We have 32 first languages other than English. Those students have got to be accommodated within our classes without any extra funding whatsoever. If they have spent two years in the primary school they are deemed to be fluent at English. Now there is a wonder when they are the only person in their family perhaps who speaks English and perhaps the only place where they hear English is at school. This is absolutely amazing and yet they are expected to understand the sophisticated terminology of a geography lesson or a history lesson on Irish history, let's face it, if you are from Lithuania or Poland or somewhere else. And all of this is to be done with increased numbers of students in the classroom. For students with dyspraxia, ADHD and all the conditions that have neither been identified or diagnosed when I started teaching are all there to be accommodated but the teachers have more students and less time per student. It's ridiculous. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Ok, we are just coming up to 1 O'Clock and could I ask that 59 be moved and I am hoping that it will be formally seconded and then I will take the vote on the motions that have been moved.

Declan Kelleher, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Declan Kelleher, INTO. A very, very brief point of order President. We have heard about the plight of children of post-primary and university level. Can you please ensure President, that the thousands of children in our primary schools who may never get to either of these sectors, that we are allowed to hear their voice before this Conference comes to an end. Go raith mile a mhaith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

I shall do, as always, my very best. Come forward and do 59 please. I am sorry for that.

John Devlin, NASUWT

This will be quick. Cyber bullying. John Devlin, NASUWT. Cyber bullying is the use of any technology or mobile phones to inflict personal or mental harm on another over a period of time by an individual or groups of individuals. Cyber bullying can accomplish many things such as harassing texts messages, making cold calls, creating inflammatory blogs – online diary – about other people, setting up nasty and spiteful websites, sending abusive messages through chat rooms or instant messaging programmes, or even by blocking an individual for no reason from joining with others on an online environment. Very worryingly it has also encompassed more seedier means such as paedophiles, sex traffickers, people who prey on the innocent and vulnerable victims by assuming false identities. It can be in the manipulation of photographs of young people and teachers and place them in sexual or offensive situations and then place them in the public domain. Cyber bullying is in many ways is worse than traditional bullying as it is often very hard for people to see that it is happening as there are no physical marks or rarely even any contact at all. It can occur between young people and even between young people and their teachers. It's very worrying assuming the identity of another young person. Unfortunately, we have popular sites that can actively encourage this type of unacceptable behaviour, namely Bebo and Rate My Teacher. These two particular websites are the centre of the problem. They allow anonymous postings attacking individuals without address. I appreciate that these sites like Rate My Teacher were clearly not intended to be used to bully teachers and we believe and we have also the evidence that it has evolved into that particular role. I would say that it is now the only reason that it exists. It does publish clear rules on its use. Threatening and abusive posts will be deleted and potentially will be reported to the police. This doesn't prevent comments in the public areas of the site. The owner claims that all remarks are vetted so that we can only assume that he has a different idea from educationalists of what is acceptable behaviour from pupils and cares less of stress or anxiety and also damage caused to teachers.

We call upon the Executive Council to first raise awareness of the issue surrounding cyber bullying. Issues that broaden week on week. Indeed a report in the Belfast Telegraph this week, a parent wrote that there were many dangers associated with the internet, a fact which he believed contributed to the suicide of his teenage daughter. We asked the Conference to bring pressure on the Governments, both North and South, to establish regulation to the mobile and internet providers involving the misuse and abuse of modern technology so that we can better protect our young people and our hard working teachers. I move.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Ok. I requested that we just get a formal seconder for that. Ok, thank you.

Can I now take the votes on the motions that we have debated so far: Motion 55, all those in favour, against, abstentions. Carried unanimously.

Motion 56, all those in favour, against, any abstentions. Again carried unanimously.

Motion 57, all those in favour, against, abstentions. Carried unanimously

Motion 58, all those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions. Carried unanimously.

And 59 Motion 55, all those in favour, against, abstentions. Carried unanimously.

We are now going to adjourn delegates and resume at 2.30pm with the Health Debate. Before people leave, what we will try and do, I will have a word with Standing Orders at lunchtime to see what we can do to accommodate the restoration of motions later on and to do that we will seek to keep the Health Debate very much within the time which has been allocated to it. I think they have got notice of about five or six questions. Could you bear with me for just a second please and we might restrict the debate on the Health Service to the questions that have been tabled in order to make up some time. Is this another point of order?

Paul Hansard, Service Industrial Professional Trade Union

Just a point of order, Chair. Paul Hansard, SIPTU Construction Branch, Dublin. I have spent all my working life trying to have the opportunity to come to a forum like this to speak, to get my views. I have sat here through every motion and listening to every speaker diligently. I have passed the option because I didn't want to take up the time of the meeting to speak on three or four motions that I had a view on. I have a very, very strong view on violence in the classroom and as a parent, not as a teacher and as a user of the service providers lets say, I wanted to have the voice of the parents heard here today and I have been refused that.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

You haven't been refused, the point I am trying to make, sorry, please could you just leave this to me please. We will try to accommodate the motions. I know that these are very important issues, I know that a preparatory work has been done. There is a lot of feeling but at the end of the day I would ask you to

appreciate that we can only operate within Standing Orders, within the time limits. We will endeavour when we resume at 2.30pm to see what we can do to restore some of these motions so that they can follow, so if we can do that today. We already have it on the energy. Thank you.

Lunch Adjournment until 2.30pm

Thursday 5 July, 2008

Afternoon Session

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

We will resume in about 30 seconds. Those who are still standing and walking around outside come in. Is the Chair of Standing Orders, Michael, around? Could you get him for me please.

Ok, sorry about this but I did promise you before lunch that we would have a word with Standing Orders and get Michael to give us their assessment of the situation and maybe move a further Standing Orders Report and consider that. Ok Michael.

Michael Sharp, Chairperson of Standing Orders

Thanks President. Michael Sharpe, Chairperson of Standing Orders. Things are moving on the hoof. Delegates, we have a serious problem. In case you haven't counted there are now 27 motions that were scheduled that have fallen off the agenda and we have to try and find a place for those and we also have three emergency motions. What we are proposing to you and some of this has been arranged in the last few minutes so I apologise if some people on the platform didn't know, you are now moving to the Health Service Question & Answer section. There is an hour and a half allocated for that with contributions from our guests and then questions that have been put in. I understand that seven questions have been submitted. They are the only questions that will be taken. We would hope, however, that an hour and a half allocated for that, we would hope that it might be possible to pick up a little bit of time on that, perhaps 10-15 minutes if possible. So, I would hope that people would cooperate with that. That would bring us to the latest 4pm, perhaps a little before then. We then

move to the Health Service motions which are Motions 65 to 69. They will then be taken after whatever time we finish the Question and Answer session. We would appeal to in relation to those motions and in relation to the other motions from now on, that there is only one speaker from a union – that in other words if a union is proposing a motion that ok other unions may want to participate and that's fine, but try please to keep it to one speaker per union and try as far as possible to formally second the motions. If we can complete that section, the Health section, before the official closing time this evening and we are hopeful that we will, we are then proposing that we move back to the Pay and the Workplace Section which was completely lost yesterday morning. Now we are conscious that there are other motions that were lost as well but we feel that the Pay and the Workplace section, since that section was completely lost we feel we must prioritise that over other things. There were 15 motions allocated there starting with Motion 17 going through to Motion 31. We would hope to take as many as those as are possible and with your agreement we will extend the closing time of Conference from 5.30pm to 6.00pm to try to accommodate as many as those as possible. However, before the close of Conference we also have a fraternal address by the Welsh TUC, Felicity Williams is here, so the President will take at an appropriate point. But otherwise we will get through as many of the Pay and the Workplace Motions as we can. And again I would reiterate the one speaker per union issue. There is one motion in that Section, Motion 18 which is one of the composites we agreed earlier in Standing Orders Report No. 1. There are three unions down to speak, it is a composite of three motions and we did assure the three unions that they would all be entitled to speak but I would hope in the circumstances that perhaps those unions and indeed Amicus who have an amendment down to it might get together between now and then and come up with some formula where they could expedite the whole thing and perhaps not take up all the allocated time to them. Hopefully we will get through as many as those motions as we can this afternoon. The rest of the motions that have fallen off the agenda will be rescheduled for tomorrow morning and we will give a further report in the morning explaining exactly how they are to be taken. So that is what we are proposing to do. I have one other item to bring to your attention; Sligo Council of Trade Unions, the local Council, have asked us for permission to conduct a collection specifically to help the work of the Manorhamilton Resource Centre which is doing some very interesting and innovative projects in this part of the country, so you will see people with collection buckets outside the Conference during the afternoon and it has been approved that that collection can be taken and I would ask you to donate as generously as you possibly can to it. So, that's the situation President. We take the Health Service now and when we complete that we move to the Pay and Conditions situation and we stay here till 6 O'Clock, thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and Congress President

Ok delegates. You have received this report from Standing Orders in response to the only Emergency Motion submitted so far which was from the Executive Council simply saying Standing Orders, help! Can we agree that further report from Michael. Agreed? Ok.

Can we move on then and it is just my task to introduce this part of the Conference to welcome Mary Raftery in the centre there. She has agreed to chair the session and Mary will do the introduction of the individual speakers. The subject of health has never been far from the top of our agenda over the last number of years whether it is in relation to funding, access to services, bed capacity, primary care, staffing, all of the many, many issues and earlier in the lifetime of the Executive Council we agreed with the assistance of a number of unions to commission a piece of work which involved Dale Tussing and Maeve Ann Wren and we published the outcome of that work in the form of a book just earlier in the year and following that we engaged in discussions with the Minister for Health, with the Taoiseach about the notion of establishing a Health Forum in order to bring all of the participants together to see if we could throw the solving problem mechanism that informs the way we do business in NESC into the health issue and see if that could advance the debate by getting a discussion and agreement on what the problems are, what needs to be done to resolve them, what needs to change and who needs to be part of that change. We did have some early meetings of the Forum but because of a number of industrial disputes, specifically involving both the nurses and doctors, that hasn't been possible to advance the work of that Forum much further than the two official meetings. We are hoping following a discussion with the Taoiseach on Wednesday to get that restored and back in play before the summer break. So, this session this afternoon is intended to again inform our own understanding of the problems and each of the participants as I said is going to be introduced by Mary and they will each make a contribution and as Michael has indicated they'll engage with as many questions as they can that have been tabled by the unions in response to the questions. So, I am going to hand over to you Mary. Thanks very much.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Can everyone hear me. What I was going to do very briefly outline the loose format we have adopted for this debate. As you know we are very squeezed for time so the amount of contributions from the floor will because of necessity be limited. The questions might come from the floor can be responded to by this very distinguished and knowledgeable and experienced panel that we have. The theme for the debate is to look at the Public versus Private in health care and we could be having it really on a more appropriate day as the HSE is meeting as we are speaking to decided on tenders for six of the private hospitals in co-location places with public hospitals. Introducing people from my left, the idea of this is

that everyone would make a three or four minutes brief introductory speech on the theme of the talks this evening, this afternoon rather, and then we will open it up to questions from the floor. The questions have been submitted in advance and what I will do, I have them here, what I will do is call on the individual questionnaire to put the question which will then in turn be answered by the panel. The hope is that at the end, once that happens, we will actually be able to put up for a brief contribution from the floor and I would ask that if that is possible, if we have time, are people are happy that we have time, that people would keep their contributions as short as possible from the floor.

So, introducing people from my extreme left, physically rather than politically, Michael Scanlan is the Secretary General of the Department of Health. He is a highly experienced and distinguished public servant with a background in the Department of Finance and he has been Secretary of the Department of Health at a fairly tumultuous time in the last two years. He hasn't said that much I have noticed in public so I think we are all very interested in what he might have to say to us this afternoon. One of the few times he did actually speak he laid great emphasis on value for money within the health service and there are a number of areas I'm sure where people will be teasing that out, people will be interested in teasing that out with him.

Fergus O'Farrell is Director of the Adelaide Hospital Society. He is a very well known advocate of the non-profit health care sector and the non-profit way of proceeding in this area. He is also a member of the National Economic and Social Forum. He wrote in the Irish Times last February I think asking people to use the case of Rosie. I was much taken with his article. People may remember the case of Rosie. In fact a memory of the case of Rosie informed and very usefully informed many a debate on the health service. Rosie was the individual who phoned up Liveline who was of the view that her life had been shortened of her inability to get an appointment for colonoscopy. She had colon rectum cancer and she very much took the nation by storm and Fergus asked people in February to use the case of Rosie as a catalyst to remember Rosie when they were voting in the General Election. I felt though he might like to comment as there was a sense of resignation more recently when he was responding to the decision of Tallaght Hospital to go the co-location route, that it was the best available on offer in the absence of investment in the public sector, and I was sorry to see that sense of resignation from him but he will address that himself.

Vincent Sheridan is the Chief Executive Officer of the VHI and you know, obviously in that context is an expert in terms of the private health care sector. I was particularly, he has a long and distinguished career including being in charge of the Stock Exchange and a whole range of business operations. I was very interested in his comments in relation to the co-location business as a way it may move us in the future. His comments of concern that the new co-located hospitals may provide us with an over supply of beds and may be, he didn't quite say curtains, for the existing private hospitals but he nearly went there. He may

go there this afternoon that the current private hospitals may be in deep trouble as a result of this huge upsurge in private beds.

Miriam Wiley is, she is head of the health policy and information division within the ESRI. She has done an enormous amount of work in terms of research very much focussed on the health area relating to financing of health and hospital services. She was appointed last month to the HSE Steering Group to have a look at beds needs in the future, a Steering Group which will oversee the external consultants if I am right on this. In her research work and in her writings she has queried the efficiency of the National Treatment Purchase Fund, something which I believe to be at the centre of the move from public to private in terms of the creation of new beds. But she has also queried, very interestingly, and hopefully will do so today, put the point she has made in the past to Michael Scanlan, she has queried the difficulties associated with the split of responsibilities between the Department of Health on the one hand dealing with policy issues and the HSE on the other hand dealing with budgetary matters, which you know has always begged a very fundamental question of who exactly is in charge of health in this country.

So, what I would like to do first and foremost is to call on Michael Scanlan. No one, I think, is going to go up to the lectern because maybe they won't speak for as long if they remain seated in their chairs such as the hope. But, to start off if I can call on Michael Scanlan to make a few introductory comments.

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General, Department of Health & Children

Thank you very much. Is that a clap in advance for me? I am glad I did something right here today anyway to sit on the left because I have a sense that I have certainly come into the lion's den and the fact that I haven't said much in public, my career actually, I spent a lot of time in industrial relations so I actually know a lot of people in this room and I doubt if they agree that I tend to be the silent type. I am quite happy to be here and to engage in this debate because it does seem to me that it is useful, important, essential to have a debate about public private but to be honest with ourselves in having that debate, that is the key thing to me to identify what is it we mean when we talk about public private. What precisely are our concerns about the private sector and just in a couple of minutes to say that again as quickly as I can to say something about the question that was put there which direction. Now I suppose when we talk about public private the words just flow off the tongue. It's a matter of fact that within our health system we have had private provision for years. We have had voluntary hospitals, we have had voluntary service providers which provide a huge range of services in the disability sector and I don't think that anybody questions that. I think that is accepted as part of our health service. So it seems to me that when we get into a debate like this actually what we mean I think is for Private for Profit is what seems to generate all the controversy. But even that I'm not sure goes far enough because again there are very significant groups of For Profit

providers who work in our health service who provide a huge range of health services and I am speaking of the general practitioners, pharmacists and while there are many debates about medical card coverage and things like this. I haven't really heard the issue, you know, of GPs as For Profit enterprises generating controversy so then I would suggest that if we are going to have a debate like this again, let's identify clearly what it is that we are talking about. So are we now down to talking about something much narrower? Is it For Profit organisations such as hospitals or other providers in that area? And, if that is the case, and I don't have an answer to all of this, but it seems to me that you have to ask yourself why, why is it you know that we seem to accept one thing, then another, but not another when maybe there are issues which really should cover the whole lot. And the other thing is that if I am right and that is the group that generates the most controversy, why I suppose is the question. What is our core concern? Is it a concern – and I am a public servant employee – is it a concern about our jobs as public service employees which is a legitimate enough concern. Are we sort of concerned about seeing our jobs being privatised by stealth as somebody else has said? And, I want to come back if that is a concern and if there is something we can do about it. And that may be one concern. Is it a concern about quality which I have heard expressed and has been put to me in the Department that there would be legitimate concerns about the quality of services provided by For Profit providers. But if that is the issue, it seems to me that as public servants, we probably have to admit that the quality of the service we provide is something which we should look at seriously too.

Or is it something, I don't know, more fundamental which is just that we believe that For Profit is somehow inappropriate in our health service and I think many people genuinely hold that view. I have to say that as a career public servant, and I spent all my career in the public service, and I am proud of that, I don't have that concern. I am not hung up on a profit motive and see it as some sense evil. It seems to me that my duty if you like as a public servant in the health services is to try and make sure that people get the best possible service. And, if for some reason that can be provided by the sector I see nothing wrong, and I might as well be honest with you about that. On the other hand I said that I am a career civil servant and I am very proud to be a public servant and I have said this in the Department time and time again that we should be proud to be public servants. And, it seems to me that if you home in the profit issue, that if the public service is able to provide services efficiently, effectively, yes I use value for money, we should easily win this race against the private sector. We don't have to make a profit so we shouldn't be afraid of taking them on as public service and showing that we can beat them because we don't have to make a profit.

So, what direction it says here, which direction. And I think the answer is very simple. I think health is a hugely complex issue and the public private issue, and I have only touched on the provisions of it, not the insurance bit or the funding bit, but the answer here to me is very simple. It is up to us is the answer. The challenge is ours and public servants and I think one of the things that

disappoints me in health is that the way we seem to react to the challenge is actually to blame ourselves, to blame our system. I am trying to look for polite language and if I was somewhere else I would use a different way of describing what we do about our services. There is an awful lot of negative publicity about the public health services and it seems to me that there are groups that will always do that. They need no help doing it and we do this to ourselves. As public servants we constantly criticise the services we provide.

I have to tell you that from my perspective, and you know this is my honest perspective, and then I will listen too, there was a time, there was undoubtedly a time in this country when we didn't have the money to invest in our public service and I think there was a legitimate view therefore that if you got the investment you would solve the problem and I think what has happened in recent years we have definitely put the investment in and I am not saying we don't need more but we have put lots of investment into our health services, and I think if we are honest we have to say that it hasn't proved to be the panacea. It is not the only answer and where it was legitimate for people to sort of create an expectation that we had a crisis here, that we had a big difficulty with this service that will bring the money. That was the way the system operated and not just in the health service but throughout the public service. Ask yourself what a private company does. What it does is that it praises its own services. Whether they are good or bad it sells their services. I think we are very poor at selling our own services.

I am probably going on too long so let me skip to what I think is the solution. I think the solution to this has to be among the people you represent. I don't think there is any way you can reform the health service and design it from the centre and send out this grand plan that will work. I think that the people providing the service are in a far better position to reform the way that service is provided. And I am not saying that glibly, I mean one of the things, I have worked on things over the years where I have ended up writing reports and those reports are based on going around and talking to people on the ground. The ideas are out there. Now, in fairness people also, somebody needs to have some sort of overview but you need to engage the people on the ground. And, I saw a speech by your President, Peter McLoone at a PSEU Conference where he effectively said that it was time for public service unions to grab the agenda of change. Stop letting senior managers write out some sort of change agenda that we all fill out forms for and that don't necessarily deliver what people want and I think he is spot on. He mentioned about the Forum and he has stolen my thunder because I think the Forum is there to be used. It has only just got off the ground. It is a blank canvas and I would love to engage at that Forum not to solve it, not to design the answer but to give people permission out on the ground to design the answer. I will stop at that.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Fergus O'Farrell.

Fergus O'Farrell, Director of the Adelaide Hospital Society

Thank you very much indeed Mary and thank you very much indeed for the opportunity to come and participate in this debate. In my introductory remarks I will try to be brief. Just a sentence or two about what the Adelaide Hospital Society is. As Mary said it is a Not for Profit organisation, a very old one actually in fact goes back to 1839 and it always had a commitment to the poor of every denomination. I suppose it was the 19th century way of putting it, but to public health care. We try in more recent times to make independent contributions to the problems in the health service. I don't have time obviously to go in to detail to our policies. I have left a few out at the Congress desk in case anybody wants them. In 2005 we published "*Just Caring – Equity and Access in Health Care*" because that seems to us to be at the core of the problem looking at as a citizen. As an ordinary citizen you don't have equal access to care and it seems to me that that it is a stain on the of the Republic if we can't provide that. We obviously share in the governance of Tallaght Hospital but we are separate from Tallaght Hospital and we benefit of course from being part of a great hospital but also we draw on primary care. In fact the chairman of our Health Policy Committee is Professor Tom O'Dowd who is a professor of general practice and so on so our interests are much wider than just hospital beds. Our core value and we have a set of values in the organisation would be that people would have access to treatment accordingly to their medical need and not according to their financial means.

We broadly share the analysis I think that is being produced in your recent document "*Addressing the Health Care Crisis*" and the Congress Briefing document which has just been published. However, we would want to go much further. We think that the key to solving a great deal of the central problems of the Irish health care system lies in the way it is financed. And, we have been focussing on well researched contributions to introducing a comprehensive social health insurance programme. Some of you will know that we got Professor Charles Norman in Trinity to publish a report on this showing what the cost might be involved in the various options if you were to introduce comprehensive social insurance and would it be feasible in the Irish context and could a particular system be designed for the Irish Republic that would suit our particular circumstances, learning if we can from the experience in Europe and other countries that have introduced and more recently comprehensive universal health insurance. The critical reason why we want to do that because it would simply seem to us to be the best way to end the two tier system which is the most glaring problem we face as citizens in Ireland. We want to put every citizen on the same basis, on an equal basis. Interestingly, we draw our roots obviously from the Christian faith in the Adelaide Hospital Society and it is

interesting if you read the parable of *"The Good Samaritan"*, the Samaritan actually said to the Inn Keeper with whom he was leaving the injured person, *"I will repay you whatever it costs when I come back."* So there is decency or value there embedded that we don't regard expenditure on the vulnerable or the ill as somehow limited. Certainly in the current circumstances we don't think it's limited. In fact, if you look at the health expenditure and Miriam will probably tell us more about this, in Ireland, if you strip out the social and so on and if you look exactly at the health we are not nearly at the limits of what should be spent on health as a proportion of our overall wealth, so we have some way to go on that. As Michael has said investment has been made but a good deal more investment needs to be made.

My answers to Michael's questions are – do we really want to see evidence based policies introduced? And we think that very often policy interventions and initiatives have not been soundly evidenced based. I just want to give you a couple of quick examples as we have a very short time. The key point is made that For Profit ownership would lead to a more efficient Irish health care system. Well I have to say to you that the international health care evidence is directly the opposite of that. And I refer you to the Canadian Health Care Research Foundation, which you can find easily on the web site, I have the copies here, where they have a system there that looks at the evidence there from time to time, that is their task. And, they say that it is a myth. That For Profit ownership of facilities does not lead to a more efficient health care system and the evidence is there. And as lay people we should adhere to the best evidence. We would not want to go to our doctor and find that he is treating us with sufficient evidence based treatment and it should be the same mark for health policy.

There is another myth that a parallel private system reduced waiting times in the public system. Again, you can look at the evidence for yourself. I have it here – it's a myth. In fact it appears from the evidence that it lengthens waiting times in the public system to have a parallel private system.

So we believe that it is actually critical that we seek as Congress or as the Adelaide Society or as boards of hospitals or whoever are providers that our health policy is based on evidence. It is very important that we believe in distinguishing the actual value that are driving the current changes as opposed to the espoused values. Everybody will put their hand up and say that they want equity and that we want equal access for all citizens but in fact the changes that are being introduced are contrary to that. And people call all change progress and of course it is not all progress. As somebody famously said the future will arrive on its own, progress does not. Progress has to be worked at, has to be envisaged and we believe in fact that there is a need for new vision. A clear set of values that would help set the agenda, driving the agenda of reforming changes not managers that are used to manage but ignored in the actual practice of policy. And I believe that we need courage as a society to facing up to a radical reform of financing Irish health care.

Today I think David Begg has mentioned the danger of an irreversible change happening with the signing of the tenders for the co-location hospitals. So, I want to conclude on a Biblical note. A Prophet in the Old Testament by the strange name of Habakkuk, and you can use your Gideon Bibles in your room to check him out later – I'm not sure if you are used to using in chapels of unions or whatever, Old Testament scripts, but I want to mention him because Habakkuk is very interesting because he was faced with appeared to be irreversible damage, irreversible change, irreversible invasion, taken over by an empire and so on and he was complaining, one of the few Prophets that actually complained to the Lord, and said why is this happening? And he stood on his watchtower watching it all happening and said "I will ask the Lord what is happening", and the Lord said to him in Habakkuk, Chapter 2, "Right division, right division, make it plain in tablets so that a runner may read it for there is still a vision for the appointed time". And I believe that if we are strong enough as a society and Social Partnership and so on to get a very clear vision of what we want in health care, I believe we have the wealth and human talent and the resources to make it happen. For example we sat down with the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice and said we will have a go at writing a vision, we will make a contribution and we have produced this document, the Irish Health Service: Vision, Values and Reality, where we set out a vision and four key values and use them to measure the current reality of the Irish health system. We are looking for a health system, and I will stop at this Mary, we are looking for a health system that will be centered on the dignity of every human being. It will treat body, mind and spirit in a holistic way and which will treat each person on the basis of their need rather than their financial status. And we believe that even though things may be happening now which appear to be irreversible and I think either this generation or another generation will tear down these walls of separation and it will create a unified health service that will treat everybody equally. And it is very important that the evidence is brought to bear and that truth is spoken about what is happening.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you very much Fergus. I am glad to see that there is no evidence of resignations there. Vincent Sheridan of the VHI, if I can call on you.

Vincent Sheridan, Chief Executive Officer, VHI

Thank you very much. I would like to thank everyone very much for the opportunity for being here this afternoon and engaging in this discussion. I have been involved in health care now for only six years. I joined the VHI Health Care as Chief Executive six years ago and I must say I am delighted to have spent some of my working life involved in health care. It really is so essential to everybody's lives its incredible. We all have a rather tenuous hold on life and

that tenuous hold is health care and I am delighted to have the opportunity to be involved in health care.

I think if you like there are two broad aspects of health care. One the delivery of health care and one the funding of health care. On the basis that we all have views on delivery, I won't talk about delivery because I've got no particular expertise on it but I will say a few words about funding. And, I have been to a number of health conferences since I came into VHI Health Care. And the one, I suppose, dominant theme of most of the conferences I have been at current rates of expansion public expenditure in virtually every country in the world, public expenditure on health care is unsustainable. The rate of expansion, it is taking up a higher and higher proportion on GNP every year. Now we are not the worst by any means, some people will say we are not the best, but it hasn't got to the levels it has in other countries but there is, I think, agreement right around the world that the rate of expansion that public finances devoted to health cannot continue indefinitely. And I think most countries have come to the conclusion that some private income must compliment public income. And probably increase the extent of private income must come into the health care sector. Just talking about public expenditure and health care, and Michael has made the point that it has been a feature of Irish health care.

Now I am going to stick my neck out a bit because again I think if you look at health care it gets very confusing because it covers so much. But from a funding point of view there are probably three main divisions it seems to me in health care. There are probably a lot more but I look at them as three main divisions. One is the primary health care area, the second is drugs & medicines and the third is hospital care. And it seems to me, and I have looked at various systems around the world, that we haven't got it wrong at all by and large in relation to the funding of a primary health care or in relation to the funding of drugs and medicines. Really the system that we have is that you pay your own way but there is a major safety net there for people on low income or people that have exceptional expenditure. And that seems to me to be a situation that works reasonably well. We can argue about the level at which people qualify for medical cards which is a very legitimate discussion. We can argue over whether people over 70 should get medical cards. I was opposed to that but I am getting warmer to the idea as they years go by. So, we can argue about those things but by and large I don't think we have got the funding of that right and it may even be sustainable as it is. But when we get to hospital care the big expenditure increase is the technology, the diagnostics, the drugs, the medicine, and the prostheses. This is all happening in the hospital area and this is where, I think, the non sustainability becomes a factor. And the signs are that this is the area of problem because that is where people take out private health insurance. That is where most of the private income flows into the health system on the hospital side. We offer primary health insurance that some take up but not enormously but huge take up in the country for private health insurance. And it's got to do with the funding and also with the access. It seems to me therefore that we

probably have two issues. One is that we need a flow of private funds coming into the health system particularly into the health care area, and again, I repeat I am not talking about delivery, Fergus was taking mainly about delivery, but on the funding side we need that.

And, the second challenge then is how do we get private funding into the health care system without creating a two tier health care system. No body is in favour of a two tier system. When I look at what VHI Health Care does, I think we provide a very good service in assisting the flow of income in to the health care area. And also, I would never say, if there is one message that I repeat more often than any other to staff in VHI Health Care, it is that we are not in competition with the public health system and I am not just saying that about VHI Health Care, I don't think any health care insurance could put itself in competition with the public health care system. It is just not a sustainable position to be in a Republic. We must all look for a better public health system that will serve all of our citizens. But there is a challenge out there to facilitate the flow of private funds into the health care system, and avoid a two tier system. And the answer must be to in someway create a situation, I don't have the answer, but I think the challenge is clear that we have got to get a system that is a parallel system rather than an opposing system if you like. And one that works in parallel with the public system and yet attacks this problem of "either or", this two tier system, this awful two tier system that currently applies and is applied to our health system.

I will leave my remarks there for a minute. Just if I could go back to one of your opening remarks Mary, I have actually stayed well away from the debate on co-located hospitals. My remarks, which I think you have quoted from a previous session, was just – I was dealing actually with the cost drivers in health insurance, in private health insurance. And one of the cost drivers is, would undoubtedly be the situation where you got over capacity of private beds in the system. And when you take the number of new hospitals that are being built in Ireland at the moment – we approved three major new hospitals in the last six months and there are more being built. I am not even including the co-located hospitals in that. The co-located hospitals are by and large in replacements so from our point of view it is not additional capacity. My point was when you put all of that together you have a potential cost driver. We can deal with potential cost drivers. We have dealt with them for MRI machines and they have resulted in lower prices but that would be a painful thing if that happened in private hospitals because there are MRI machines not being used around the country because they don't come in to the prices being offered. And, if I may, while I have the floor make one other comment. I read in the paper this morning about a price increase that the VHI was going to impose in September. Can I just use this opportunity to say that it was total speculation and it was again totally untrue and totally incorrect. There is a price increase but the figures quoted were not correct.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you, thank you very much Vincent. With a bit of luck, sometime this afternoon we might tempt you into talking about co-location which you have, as you say, not so far done. But next if I could call on Miriam Wiley, Miriam.

Miriam Wiley, Senior Researcher, Economic & Social Research Institution

Thank you Mary. I like to think I am on your left which is important. One of the advantages, I suppose, of going last is that you get a view of the other speakers but also a disadvantage when you see who has stolen one's thunder. However, again I am very appreciative of the opportunity to speak here. Again as always I think we could spend the whole day talking about these issues. The brief we were given was Public versus Private – Which Direction? I think the horse has bolted on the Public versus Private issue. Over half the Irish population has chosen to buy health insurance. We are where we are, you know, people are voting with their feet and their pockets with that regard. Maybe it would be simpler if it was otherwise, maybe it would be better but it is where we now sit. And I think the challenge, particularly for the policy makers, and those in the Executive area is to ensure that, the way our health system is structured – it is structured in a way that is equitable so that those in need most get the care they require, where they require it and when they require it, and I suppose to be the guardians of the public purse. Michael raised the point there of what's wrong with For Profit companies and I think that is a very valid point particularly as this country has done very well out of For Profit companies. And yesterday the Taoiseach was, I know in his main script, talking about the importance of how well the economy has done, is doing and how much society has benefited and recent work from the ESRI has certainly supported a benefit to society on what has happened to the economy. I suppose my concern is the extent to which public resources, that's the public purse, may be used to support For Profit venture that will end up, I suppose, drawing out resources into a For Profit context that might be better used in a public service context. I suppose it is where you draw that line as to how public resources are invested and the extent to which that is for the benefit of all. And I don't doubt that that is the objective but I think the reality is what we have to be careful about. I was interested recently that the newly appointed Scottish Health Minister has made a very clear statement to the effect that public resources will not be used to fund private sector competition with the NHS. That the extent to which the private sector wants to compete with the NHS, they can fund it themselves. And I think it is quite an interesting perspective from a system that was very much sort of fostering the Pay for Performance perspective. I think that is the first point.

I think the other point I want to come back to is too often when we talk about the health system in Ireland, too often we talk about the hospital system. The reality is that only about one in ten people will encounter the hospital system in any one

year. However, the majority of families will have more than one contact with the General Practitioner in the primary care system. And, as has already been said, about 70 per cent of the people here pay full cost of the visit to their General Practitioner. And it is very interesting to me that I don't recall ever having people walk the streets asking for better public access and better public funding for General Practitioner care. We had some discussion about it in the general election campaign but very little. The focus seems to be very much on the hospital sector and that is the sector where people, in general, are least likely to have contact. The issue is I think that that is where people get most afraid because where people have contact with the hospital system, where they are most concerned about their health, and that is where they are most concerned about not getting the care they need. But, I think we should not lose sight of the fact that about 70 per cent of people pay full cost of their General Practitioner and that is, as you say, very much a private endeavour.

But the other key point is if there is ever a discussion about expanding access and entitlement if you like to so called free primary care, two thirds of expenditure on funding of primary care goes on drugs. And that is a key issue. Whenever we are talking about expanding access to that sector and I think there is a real debate to be had about expanding access to that sector its strong cost is a huge driver and I think that is a key point in having that debate.

I want to make one more before I finish because I know Mary is very conscious of our time and we would certainly like to have you more involved. Following up on I suppose Fergus's point with regard to the Canadian evidence as regards what happens when you do mix the various influences in the health system, there is also a very important Australian study that I suppose analysis the affects of the Australian Government's very explicit engineering of ever increasing participation of health insurance in that country where the increase subsidisation and so on to the health insurance industry, again putting forward many of the arguments we tend to hear about reducing waiting lists and so on, and I certainly support Fergus's point here in terms of wanting to see much better evidence in terms of having these very important discussions. And that study found that as a result of the Australian Government's involvement in promoting the health insurance sector, that in fact what happened as a result of it where you actually had increased expenditure by the Government you actually had increases in equity in funding the health care system because there was more funding going to support the health insurance system. And also there was no observable affects on efficiency. Now what is important for us is to learn from international experience in terms of promoting our own health care system.

And I suppose in conclusion we were asked to address the issue "Which Direction" when we talk about Public versus Private, I don't think there is any doubt that the direction has to be whatever is best for the patient and I think in fairness to the Department of Health that is the point that they have put at the

centre of their health strategy and I have no doubt that we would support, I think, the Department towards achieving that objective. Thank you.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you very much Miriam. Just before I open it up to the floor, I suppose I would ask the panel in the context of many of the questions that are coming and indeed the nature of the debate, and the way we tend to talk about health, it is very easy to talk about structures, about funding, about financing, even about ideology and systems, there is a fundamental point which I think most people will want to know is can they get the treatment the need when they want it and will it make them better. And that critical point will it make them better is something we very often lose sight of. I must share with you before I open up the debate to the floor one statistic. Very often life expectancy is quoted as a measure in this country and elsewhere of how good a health service is and indeed our life expectancy has been rising. It is 77 for men and 81, thankfully, for women. And that compares favourably, we are tenth in Europe under WHO statistics. However, the World Health Organisation has another measure which I believe is a measure which is far more critical to all of us and I call them the "Healthy Life Expectancy". In other words the number of years you will have on this earth where you are healthy and that relates exactly to the quality of the health care to which we have access. When you look at Ireland in context to the rest of Europe we are actually second last in Western Europe. We are 22nd in respect of European countries. The only countries that are worse than us are countries in Eastern Europe that are striving to catch up and indeed some of them will have passed us by. The healthy life expectancy according to the World Health Organisation for men is 68, for women it is 72, so there is a huge gap there between how long you will live and how long you will be healthy for. So I think it is important that that be borne in the back of everybody's mind in response to questions relating to funding, financing, structuring or whatever.

So for the first question if I could call on Fintan Hourihan of the IMO.

Fintan Hourihan, Irish Medical Organisation

Thank you. Fintan Hourihan of the IMO, still opposed to co-location, I might be just minutes before the decision is made.

I'm asking a question and I very much welcome Professor Wiley's comments about primary care. I think there are far too much talk about hospitals and not enough about primary care and that's the question I want to ask. Does the panel favour universal eligibility for free primary care services provided by primary care teams, which are as we know, being developed here as part of following on from the health strategy and the primary care strategy? Thank you.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Miriam.

Miriam Wiley, Senior Researcher, Economic & Social Research Institute

Thanks Fintan. I think I made a few points just earlier that would relate to that question and I think Fergus may have, I think, some further information to provide where the study that he referred to earlier actually does provide important cost data in terms of I suppose really the fairly cheap way you could get quite important expansion and better access to low cost primary care. I suppose on the one hand is it a good thing? We are quite exceptional in a European context in the fact that the majority of our population pay full cost for General Practitioner services. So I think there is certainly a discussion to be had in terms of expanding low cost if not no charge access to GP services to the population, certainly to larger sections of the population. The issue there is how you decided to do that. Is it going to be by age group, is it going to be further on income, is it going to be some definition of need. You would still have to tackle the drug cost. That is the huge issue in terms of looking at any expansion of what we have as called the Medical Card Scheme. However, the point I would now make goes back to the organisation of Primary care and certainly we are seeing some progress in the Primary care strategy which is to be welcomed in terms of the themes and investment thereof. However, not only are we now having a two tier system, I think we are close to having a three way split in terms of our health care system at the moment, particularly looking at the "out of hours" developments. And I think that is where I would again call for real progress on information systems monitoring what is happening with out of hours. After 6pm almost everywhere now and at weekends we have out of hours systems in place and unfortunately what is happening increasingly is that it is locum doctors that are in place so that the patient is becoming further removed from the General Practitioner and we have increasing use of the ambulance system so that we are going to have fall-out in terms of access to A&E. This system is at the early stages of development and it may be teething problems but I would call for absolutely please, please, please can we have real thorough and effective monitoring on what's happening in out of hours. Because if that system doesn't work we are going to have the patient further removed from the General Practitioner in the Primary care system and we are going to have an even bigger problem in our A&E systems.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thanks Miriam. I will pass that straight across to Michael from the viewpoint of the Department of Health particularly to answer Miriam's question about monitoring but also the overall question.

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General of Department of Health & Children

Well, yes. Sorry, let me go back to the basic question. With respect that is only part of it. I think the real question that was asked, I don't think it was about access to GP services if I took it right. I thought it was access to Primary care services in total, you know. Miriam, and I know, zoned in on the GPs but you mentioned earlier what is the real challenge and you said is it to make us better or to help us get better. And up to a point I absolutely agree but I would put to you actually that it is a bigger question which is can we stop ourselves getting ill in the first place and we ignore that even more than we ignore the Primary care piece of it. And that is the thing I think Fintan was hinting at. Now I get the message and I am two years in this job and only been around to so many places, but I get a message right across the world that it doesn't matter what health care system you running; American, Canadian – much flaunted, very proud of their public systems, the same issues facing them that if we don't move it right to the left, if you don't mind me saying so, from hospitals to Primary care to preventing we are going nowhere. So, I think that is the service you are talking about and not necessarily GP led even. Ask yourself whether it should be universally free, frankly, at this point in time as a pragmatist I don't see that happening and I am not sure I see it as essential but I would have argued for and continue to argue for forcibly is some very fair, transparent way of helping those who need a medical card or a GP visit card. To have a very clear. To have it very clear as to how you qualify for it and very simple to understand so that you know what you are entitled to. And that's where I would go. I mean its not like I disagree with Miriam has said on the GP out of hours, I just think we are missing a much bigger issue here.

Vincent Sheridan, Chief Executive Officer, VHI

First of all it's about eligibility, the question, but I do believe that we have got to develop our primary care services and that's part of Government policy as I understand it. And that is absolutely essential because it all begins and ends then with far more people ending up in hospital if we don't have good primary care services. So I agree about the development and the delivery of that of primary care. When it comes to universal eligibility or back down to the funding question, and really it does come down to priorities and you have to have priorities, just my own view is that at this point and time that wouldn't be the priority in this point and time, that wouldn't be the priority. I think when you get to hospital care you are dealing with matters of life and death and at this point they are they priorities. It would be great if you could get to there eventually but at any point the priorities, you have to be clear in your priorities.

Fergus O'Farrell, Director of the Adelaide Hospital Society

Very briefly, because it's better if we could get people's views. I agree absolutely with Michael and other people who would favour a population health approach. I

think that is absolutely essential and I would like in fact to see Michael's Department, one of the recommendations they made, if you come to the part of population health, that it does get the whole budget and it does pull those leavers to shift exactly as you say, I think that would be a big shift that has been made. But we are to make it. I mean we have got a huge resource that we can use and potentially I think we can go to ten or twelve even per cent of society's expenditure of our wealth on health, we are at about seven at the moment. We are not limited by what we can do. If we have the vision and the desire to do it. In relation to a pre, Miriam said we are exceptional in Europe the way we organise our access to General Practitioner and that we have to pay. Most people would put the emphasis because 90 per cent of the episodes that you are need are at that level and its better to intervene early and so on, all the arguments you know. It's better if we have a free GP. Obviously we would have to move to that in progressive stages. How we are going to organise the rest of the primary care system is a mystery absolutely to me because the HSE keep drooling out 'virtual' primary care teams and the remain in this 'virtual' realm and very few have actually got concretely into action and so its difficult to judge them and I think they are going to loose the race to the private enterprise, they are going to loose the race to the touchstones on the other companies.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you very much. I would just like to briefly ask Fintan for a very quick response to what he has heard from the panel.

Fintan Hourihan, Irish Medical Organisation

Well there is no doubt but that the cost of extending universal or continuing with universal access to all aspects of primary care would be prohibitively expensive. I suppose the concern doctors would have is that we are now seeing a situation where, for example, doctor visit only card is coming in instead of the medical card. I think that the fact that a very small proportion of the people eligible for it have actually looked for it and availed of it probably tells us something. There is no doubt but that our belief would be very much that the single biggest contribution that could be made and the point was well made, was to start looking at prevention and prevention would start in primary care and operate on a population health basis. I mean, I would just make the comment that I would commend Congress for organising this seminar and Michael Scanlan and indeed all of the panel for coming along and taking questions because there is no point in pretending that there are trite or easy answers to any of this. But I am heartened by the fact that there is a recognition that there needs to be far greater emphasis put on resourcing primary care because I think that as the point has been well made, far more people are going to meet their GP throughout the course of the year that will ever end up in hospitals and if we want to avoid the problems that are manifested in hospitals because we don't have enough beds, and lets be straight about that, then I think we need to put far greater emphasis,

there is a very good primary care strategy which we fully endorse and we would just like to see it rolled out more quickly and with funding.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thanks very much Fintan. Moving directly to the issue of beds and the dispute indeed over, because it is a disputed fact as to whether we have enough beds or not. If I could have Helen Murphy from SIPTU for the next question.

Helen Murphy, Services Industrial Professional Trade Union

Thank you chair. Panel, Helen Murphy, SIPTU. Professor Brendan Drumm has repeatedly stated that bed capacity is not an issue. Why then are the co-location proposals going ahead if extra beds are not required?

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you very much Helen. I will start with Fergus on that one.

Fergus O'Farrell, Director of Adelaide Hospital Society

Thanks for the question. It is a difficult one to know. I can't understand Professor Drumm's position except to say this. All the elements he imagines will be right in an ideal system, you would actually use your acute beds more efficiently and that is true but in an ideal world, that was the case. Now he puts all the other – lack of primary care and all the other capacity deficits that we have in the system, if they were all gotten right you would maybe have a better way of assessing your actual needs per acute bed. But there is little change of that happening so as Miriam says, we have to live in the real world where we are now and we are, I can only speak for the hospital I am most familiar with, we are simply underbedded. The hospital was planned in the 1980s for 800 beds. We built in the early nineties 513 and we have added just up to 600 now. We need at least the 800 if we are at least to be comparable to the other big teaching hospitals with similar populations that we serve. In fact we probably are more accessible and serve more in our A&E and so on so we do need the beds. We need about 200. We have proved how even a small quantum of beds relieves a dreadful situation in A&E when we added 30 beds in the transition suite which made a huge difference to the quality of patient care and was a simple quick build providing a ward context. So beds are needed.

Why the co-location proposal is going ahead is that it has now got a democratic mandate. Up to now it didn't and we put clearly on the public record our huge reservations about it. It not only has got a mandate from the people in the sense that the Government were returned but the Dail there recently has actually approved it as well. So it's the only show in town. It is not the show we would prefer but we do need the capacity and its going ahead for that reason.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Just very briefly, are you saying that Brendan Drumm is wrong?

Fergus O'Farrell, Director of Adelaide Hospital Society

I am saying yes, in the current circumstances I don't see the basis for his judgement that we don't need more beds, except that he is imagining if he had every other part of the system right, then maybe he could do with the quantum of 12 or 13,000 beds whatever we have. But I think that unrealistic. I think as Vincent says the reality is people are turning up to be treated and cared for in hospitals in the absence of other provision and they have to be looked after. We can't turn people away when they come in through the door and we have to care for them in a quality way, a proper way and to do that we need beds.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Vincent.

Vincent Sheridan, Chief Executive Officer, VHI

I don't know actually whether there is, I have no way of knowing, whether there is a shortage or a surplus, or there is a shortage of beds in the public system or not. But I do know that there is a danger of over capacity in the private sector. And let me just explain one, what I regard as an absolutely remarkable statistic. That if you take, and I am just talking about VHI's experience over the last ten years, in the ten years from 1997 to 2007 the number of claims, the volume of claims, the number of claims that we paid for increased by 70 per cent. In the same period the inpatient claims we paid for decreased by six per cent, went down by six per cent. And, in addition to that decrease in the actual number of claims that we paid for there was a three per cent decrease in the average length of stay. Now, the other side of the coin was that there was a 165 per cent increase in the number of day care claims that we paid for. So there is a huge dynamic taking place out there in the deliver of health care from inpatient to day care. That is very frequently overlooked it seems to me when bed capacity is being talked about. And its for that reason that we have seen three new hospitals been built or approved by us in the last six months, that we believe on the private side we are facing an over capacity. Now that over capacity may disappear if there is major purchase of private capacity from within the public system because that was the reason that the tax relief was given for the building of these hospitals in the first place as I understand it. But if that doesn't take place we are in danger of having an over capacity on the private side and over capacity is a cross driver. So, whether this same dynamic is taking place in the public system or not I am not sure. I suspect its probably not taking place to the same extent because we

can encourage of the movement from inpatient to day care by saying that certain procedures will only be paid for on a day care basis and certainly if they can be done on a day care basis, not just financially but also medically, it is a far safer way of visiting hospitals these days. So there are dynamics that are taking place out there which when the debate about capacity is being talked about are generally recognised.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you. I think the person that should be able to help is Michael Scanlan!

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General of Department of Health & Children

Well again I have to say, with respect, there is an element isn't there of the devil and quoting scripture. I mean are SIPTU saying to me that they believe that we don't need any extra beds in our public health system. If so, that is not what I read in a recent Congress paper on the Health Care System. It is not what I heard Vincent say, so let's be honest enough with one another, that there is a debate, yes, and the debate can be had about capacity in terms of acute bed capacity and needs in this country. But to say that Brendan Drumm is expressing very simply in one way and that is in conflict with the co-location I think is an unfair presentation of what is going on here.

I think the reality here is we are dealing with an ever changing dynamic system and we are dealing with the system as it exists. We do have to face that reality. Yet, as Fergus says, there is an element of if we could get to the best we certainly wouldn't need all the beds we can. But how long does it take us to get to the best. We said earlier that population health approach prevention - that is where we want to go. I am sure no one is going to thank us if that meant that we weren't able to treat people who absolutely needed treatment and they turned up in our acute hospitals, so you have to balance both as you go along in my view. There is a Government policy there to put extra beds into the system and there is a Government policy decision that you are all well aware of that says that co-location is the best way of putting up to a 1,000 of those beds in. And I know coming down here that co-location was bound to be an issue so with your indulgence just from my own point of view, can I just say a couple of things on it.

I think there are very legitimate concerns and David Begg in particular and I have been to a couple of events where this has been debated and I do respect those concerns. I don't think anybody has the answer to this. Our public private mix in this country across a range of issues is, well unique is a kind word for it. I mean we glibly talk about we all want; you know we don't want a two tier system. We are running a private system in our public hospitals people. We are running a private system in our public hospitals. That is a fair question that we should ask ourselves it seems to me. We should ask that. I don't think this is all about money either I have to say. I deliberately didn't say at the start that I thought that

the private sector was more efficient. I said that it says it is more efficient and I said we should as public servants are able to beat it. In fact one of the advantages of co-location as I see it is that perhaps for the first time instead of working in competition there is an element of collaboration between the two facilities on the site. It is not a case of build whatever you like over there and take whatever private patients – you might cherry pick them, do whatever you like. It is quite the opposite. There are requirements attaching to people who are going to build these facilities and those conditions run all the way from the physical appearance of the building to avoid this perception that you drive on to a facility and you see the run down public hospital over there and the gold plated private facility over there. That is one of the conditions in that and it runs right down through it to full sharing of information which we don't have with our public and private systems at the moment. And I would urge that what we do is try our best because this, it seems to me, is the strength of the Irish economy and why can't it be the strength of the Irish health system. Some sound pragmatism, instead of saying public is good, private is bad, or as a lot of people are saying, public is bad, private is good. Instead of saying that let us be pragmatic about it. What if the private sector opts to do what it thinks is right but work if we can with it and then show that we can do what we can do better would be my view. And I think co-location does offer that opportunity.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Without accusing you of not answering the question, your view on Brendan Drumm's repeated statement that there is no need for additional bed capacity within the public health system.

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General of Department of Health & Children

If I want to be honest and I do want to be honest on this I would have to say that even within the Department I would have debates with people in there. It seems to me that on the one hand the portrayal of the figures of our acute hospitals are way overly simplistic. There are suggestions that we cut the crips out of our acute beds in the eighties and that oh, we need to recover them and nobody thinks of mentioning that as far as I know from figures I saw there was something of a 30 per cent cut in bed capacity in many, many other countries in Europe at the same time. Right, one fact. The other thing is that we have a number of beds per thousand population, it depends whether you are prepared to count the private capacity in this country because of the nature of our system. If you count in that private capacity, if you then adjust for our age and age does matter in our hospitals, but I would say that Fergus would confirm this, that if you went around and counted the age of the people in our hospitals you would soon discover it matters, our figures then are very different. Now on the other hand, I more than anybody open the paper every day and see, you talk about the "Rosie" case, and you talk about all those cases of people queuing in A&E. I'm Department of Finance background, that does not mean I don't see people. People are lying on

those trolleys, people are waiting to get into our hospitals so I don't think that there is this simple answer oh we definitely have enough beds lets not do any more or boy we need another 3,000 beds and that will be the answer. I don't think either of those is true frankly and I think you have to move it along and get a certain amount of investment over the next whatever, say five years, lets take the five year period and you try gently perhaps to steer more and more towards prevention in primary care while at the same time trying to improve access to and treatment in your acute hospitals.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Just to pursue very briefly before I come to Miriam, I mean the Health Strategy did indicate the need for a further 3,000 beds which was Government policy. It is now Government policy to build private hospitals and the head of the HSE has said there is no need for further bed capacity. So, we are getting a number of mixed messages so just to return to you again to try and get a more definitive answer, do you agree with Brendan Drumm because he has been very categorical about this. He doesn't beat about the bush and he has said we don't need any more beds.

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General of Department of Health & Children

Sorry, you are right that the Health Strategy, in fact I don't think it was the health strategy itself, I think it was something, was it a Fianna Fail, I know there was Mary ??? Report but anyway it led into a Government commitment to something of the order of 3,000 extra beds. I didn't bring the figures with me and anyway we all debate figures as an infinite item about the actual number of beds that have been provided. Do you count day places or not. The recent Congress document seems to entirely dismiss the issue. Sorry, my answer to the question is what I have said already. I honestly don't believe there is a simple yes or no answer to an issue like this. Well let me answer it. If we could achieve in the morning the type of health system that I believe Brendan Drumm is outlining, then I don't think we would need extra beds. Do any of you think we can achieve that in the morning? You asked me to answer the question. I put it to you earlier that the challenge is as much yours as mine if you want to deliver that type of health system. So I don't believe you can do it in the morning. That being so what the co-location initiative is doing is it is providing beds for public patients, public patients.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

I think we can read into that whatever we want to read but, yes, but I do find it interesting the fact that you do not robustly row in behind Brendan Drumm in terms of his very clear statements that the fact that no beds are needed.

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General of Department of Health & Children

I think it would be unfair of you to characterise it that way because people are trying their best to present it as differences between Brendan, between his board, between the Department, between the Minister. I think that is unfair.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Very well, Miriam.

Miriam Wiley, Senior Researcher, Economic & Social Research Institute

Again, no better man than Brendan Drumm to speak for himself and the pity is that he is not here but to talk about it. Again when I have heard about Brendan Drumm speak about this issue it has been in the context of putting in place say improvements in primary care, putting in place more flexible work practices and so on, so again with respect to the man I don't think he is saying, you know blankly, there is no need for more beds. If this were achieved he would expect you know that we have a different view on bed capacity.

I think, again in fairness to Michael, there isn't, it is not a yes or no black and white kind of answer because you look at the recent report that was published by the HSE on the appropriateness of hospital admissions and that sounds that on any one day 39 per cent of the patients shouldn't have been in the beds. And it said that 13 per cent of the patients shouldn't have been admitted to the hospital. When we look at productivity in different hospitals and productivity by bed we see huge variations across beds, across hospitals, across Departments. When I compare, for example, average length of stay in voluntary hospitals versus regional hospitals I find that on average patients are staying a day longer in one type of hospital relative to another. So, you know, you fix all of that and then we have a different view on bed capacity. There is a question of pacing and timing and I think that is one of the critical factors for us. We clearly don't want to get into a huge expansion if down the road we feel, ok you know, we are going to be facing a different scenario. We are facing substantial increase in our population up to 2016 we are looking at perhaps a 10 per cent increase in our population. They are the projections at the moment. Obviously the ageing issue. We hope to keep our people healthier for longer, practice the population health approach. There is a lot of ifs and buts in that but I think again it isn't always just if there is a problem in A&E, the answer isn't always we need more beds. We have to look and interestingly I was a member of A&E as part of work a couple of months ago and a lot of them were completely free and a lot of the consultants in fairness to them said we actually did look at how we did some things and some things were fixed and therefore there is improvement. So I think, you know, we are, you know, into its 'horses for courses' sort of answer, you know and there is another report due out.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

If I can briefly, very quickly, if I can ask Helen Murphy from SIPTU just to respond for a minute or two to what she has heard.

Helen Murphy, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Chair, first of all I would like to correct Michael Scanlan. SIPTU has not said there is adequate bed capacity. It has been Professor Drumm that has said that and like Fintan Hourihan, I and SIPTU are totally opposed to co-location. And we believe Professor Drumm was wrong and that we need more beds. Co-location will further exacerbate the two-tier system that already exists. As a health service worker myself I know patients will be cherry picked, picking younger, healthier patients with less complex and more profitable treatments. The Health Strategy of 2001 should be revisited and the findings of those delivered on. And a proper public health service funded. Thank you.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you Helen.

I am glad you mentioned the Health Strategy because the next question we are going to is from Liam Doran of the INO.

Liam Doran, Irish Nurses Organisation

Thanks Mary. Just to follow on from Helen's comment, I mean our question is: Is the Health Strategy and Primary Care Strategy announced in 2001 the policy guiding the provision of health care at this time? If there has been a deviation from those policies, what alternatives exist and what multi-annual capital and revenue funding is in place to meet the perspective health needs of this nation?

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thank you Liam. Michael Scanlan.

Michael Scanlan, Secretary General of Department of Health & Children

Thank you. Helen, just to be fair, I kind of understood SIPTU that they weren't saying that there were no more beds, it was just that I couldn't resist the temptation when you asked the question that way.

On the Health Strategy and the Primary Care Strategy, I suppose a couple of comments. Everywhere I go I must say I hear huge praise for both of them and it seem to me that the work that went into them in drawing them up involved a lot of people but everybody seems to have brought into the overall approach that is

outlined in it. And I think it is, to answer Liam's question, simply it is guiding policy. I think in many ways it outlined what we talked about earlier, about a population health approach, that if it is to be sustainable, and I think it has those core values that Fergus talks about too in terms of equity but also in terms of getting access. If anything I suppose what I'd say is that that issue around the need to sort of look and we are not behind other countries in this in terms of the quality and management piece of this which is what has come up more and more I think even since the Health Strategy, come up on countries' agenda. That is where you need to go if it is going to be sustainable. So I'd say it is guiding it but it is not a static strategy and it shouldn't be a static strategy.

On the money, you asked what multi-annual capital and current, the simple answer is that there are multi-annual capital envelopes for the health service just like all the other parts of the public service. It was a new arrangement that was bought in. I can't remember why and when. There is no such thing as multi-annual current allocations for anybody, health service included. But I am prefer to take it if I can with Liam's permission as what are we talking about going forward in terms of terms of both the funding needs and the funding that we are likely to get. And again reading the Congress document recently seem to me to call for a very massive increase in capital spending which is one thing and then I think it said a ten per cent per annum increase in health spending and that will bring us to where we want to be. If I understood it correctly, I suppose my reaction is if only that were so from all I have seen so far because we have had that sort of level of increase in health spending and the real issue seems to be that so much of it goes into keeping the existing system going. That actually the capacity within what is left is very marginal to really change the system. It is very small and that is why I think, not that we don't need the funding, and I personally believe that we will get the funding, ok, you know it depends on how the economy goes, but I personally believe that health is right up there as one of the top priorities but I think if we concentrate on the extra funding we will miss out on what we need to do. I think we have to look at how we spend the existing money and I have said that before but I honestly believe that it is true. I think on the capital, unfortunately and I might as well say it as it is, that we have a poor record in recent years of even spending the capital we have got. And I do think that is a pity because I think with the right sort of capital investment it can actually revitalise the service in all sorts of ways and it doesn't necessarily have to bring a huge revenue bill with it. And I think it would make our health system much better I must say. So, if we could gear up to spend our capital in a different way and to spend it efficiently, again personally I would have no problem going making a strong case for more capital investment.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Vincent.

Vincent Sheridan, Chief Executive Officer, VHI

Well, I have very little to add to the question. This is really a public policy issue, budgetary issue. When I look at the problems Michael has in terms of 14 or 15 million pounds worth of expenditure, I know the problems you have trying to balance the books when you are dealing with a billion pounds, that's our private VHI's revenue and very close to outgoings as well ever year, so I won't really comment on the public policy issues involved Mary.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Miriam, this is very much your area.

Miriam Wiley, Senior Researcher, Economic & Social Research Institute

Yes, you know, I agree with Michael. I think the Health Strategy really put on the table the sort of agenda that all of us would decide to support and I think it was, and I would expect, continues to be hugely supported by stakeholders and participants and so on. What seem to happen to me is that the reform agenda which followed very close on the publication of the Health Strategy, which obviously had a lot of controversial issues, I think I has taken a bit of the thunder away from it. And I think perhaps it would be a good thing to get a bit more clarity to maybe to get back to some of the very fundamentals that were addressed in the Health Strategy and the was the issue of equity, which continues to be an issue, accountability, the quality issues and putting the patient at the centre of what we do in the health system. And, I don't think anyone would dispute those as very core principles to which we would all aspire to see implemented in our health system. And I think perhaps there is a good case for clearing away some of the fog, if you like, that has descended in the meantime and getting back to clarity on those issues. I support that.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Fergus.

Fergus O'Farrell, Director of Adelaide Hospital Society

Well, very quickly. I agree with Miriam that the reform agenda leading to the HSE 2005 has affected whether we know the Health Strategy and what part of the Health Strategy is still governing policy. As you know the HSE has published their own strategy – The Transformation Programme 2007-2010 but as far as I am aware I am not sure whether the Government endorsed that or I think we are getting the nod that we are getting close to time, whether the Government has endorsed the transmission and it has now taken the place of where the Health Strategy was because it is a very detailed programme for change in the Health Service. I think there is democratic deficit frankly in the way the HSE operates. I

think we would like to get back to some of the key points in the strategy where you would have a good deal more public inpatient participation, much greater people centeredness, a much greater feeling by the Irish people that it's our health service and that we own it and that we are proud of it and can get involved in it and that we are not excluded when decisions are made and when policy is designed. I think we have a huge task there to restore that confidence in the public in the health service. And, I think maybe the Health Forum may be can revisit this hopefully and look at a revision of the Health Strategy. And I do believe and I would say it again, Michael's Department on behalf of the people, needs to be accountable for the money and it needs to be accountable for the policy and the understanding was that the HSE and the other parts of it were to deliver and that isn't happening.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

We are coming under pressure to end this but obviously if I could ask you to be as brief as possible, Liam, but to say a few words about what you have heard in terms of response to your question.

Liam Doran, Irish Nurses Organisation

Well I think I am reminded immediately of a comment that Michael made early on about what he was looking for was people within the service saying what needs to be done about the service to make it better and patients and workers and professionals in the health service. That is exactly what the health strategy did by the way. It asked everyone but then it was given back to the policy makers it immediately became not only foggy but very muddy indeed and it was parked because of financial implications and so on. There was so much in the Health Strategy that the last number of years should have thought us was right. We speak about acute bed capacity; it had a significant sustained investment in continuing care beds. What we have done in the meanwhile is sub vent private nursing homes and the provision of long term care without a debate on that. We have a deficit of high dependence, long term continuing care beds, we had a parking of primary care, we have stoking of that up at the moment but not in the manner envisaged by the primary care strategy. So, the one time that I think we had an opportunity to get it right in the interests of the people that we are all there to serve –that patient – having listened to the patient, the political system and the policy makers lost the huge opportunity and everyone who currently uses the Irish health system is suffering because of that, and the sooner we get back via the Forum, I hope, to the foundation stones that were contained in that Health Strategy the sooner we can get to, I was there in the Mansion House when it was launched, it is still my objective that we have a world class health service and that is what the strategy offered us. Thank you.

Mary Raftery, Irish Times Columnist and Chair of Health Sector Debate

Thanks very much Liam. Just to finish up at this stage because we are pretty much out of time. I would suggest that perhaps as an assistance to the Forum, that the comments of the panel and this afternoon could be recorded, I don't know if anyone was recording them, and transcribed and provide as a kind of a blue print. I see Michael Scanlan smiling at me for that one. But, I think they could provide, I mean there were certainly a number of facts, figures and perspectives that I found particularly interesting coming from the different perspectives that we heard on the panel. I mean I think the kind of messages that were coming through were strongly one of defence for the public health system and one of evidence based research in terms of how we are actually spending the money at the moment. They were the two messages that came to me very strongly, that whatever we spend the money on must work and that we must also defend what it is we do and what it is we have within the public health service. So, on that note if I can thank everybody on the panel for coming down here and for sharing their thoughts and indeed thank everybody from the floor who put a question to us. Thanks very much indeed.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Just before you depart Mary, can I on behalf of the panellists and on behalf of the Congress, thank you very much for coming along and the excellent way that you have chaired this session for us and can I assure you, as the Taoiseach discovered yesterday to his horror, everything that is said at this Conference is recorded. Ok, we are just going to have to make some adjustments to the stage so I just ask you to bear with us for about two minutes and we are going to move to the debate on the motions on health starting with the Executive Council motion and the amendment from Amicus. Ok.

Could we have your attention please delegates? I am witnessing this conversation that is taking place down to my left. Can someone tell them that we can hear the buzz up here. Liam, please.

Liam Doran, Irish Nurses Organisation

President, delegates, on behalf of the Executive Council, Liam Doran moving Motion 65. In doing so can I just recognise firstly the work that Congress has done over the past two years in relation to health. I think certainly that Congress has endeavoured to put it back on to the centre of our agenda. I am not sure if we gather it by the number of people still in the hall, but anyway because the last hour and a half of debate has only galvanised me in to saying we have much more work to do.

Could I also say that the policy document that was commissioned by Congress, the Health Report, has been a valuable contribution, I think, to the overall health

debate and it does provide the evidence that the panellists were speaking about that allows us, with confidence, to develop and present our argument about what is required for a free, open and equitable and readily accessible health care system. Health is a social good. It's not something that should be depended upon where someone was born, or the money one has. If we are a community not just an economic engine to drive growth, if we are a community then health is a common social good, that I should worry about my neighbour's health and wellbeing and he or she should worry about mine. So the sooner again we realise that the better for all our wellbeing.

And, Ireland does have a two-tier system. Now many of us in this room buy in to that two-tier system but that doesn't make it right. That only means that we are only concerned about our health care and how we have to deal with it and so on. What is now being put forward this afternoon about co-located hospitals. Let's say it quiet clearly and quiet loudly – co-located hospitals the way they are going to be run will further divide the country. It will create further two-tierism within the health care system. It will give speedier access, they will cherry pick, but I tell you they won't be there at 2 O'clock in the morning in an A&E Department in Beaumont, St James or the Mater. That will still be the people that we represent at all grades, support staff, health professionals, they will be the ones dealing those cases because the private sector hospitals will not want to know that type of caring environment. The public sector can do a quality assured world class job in the provision of health care. Every day public servants working in the Irish health care system, whether they be a speech and language therapist, an occupational therapist, a social care worker, a support staff, a nurse or a mid-wife, an administrator, a clerical support staff, they are flexible, they do bend, they do deliver products to the people. What they haven't been given is the tools and the infrastructure to do that well. And this country should be ashamed of a report issued two weeks ago that found seven of our ten A&E units unfit for purpose. That is what it found – unfit for purpose and I don't know about anyone in this room, but I have yet to meet a patient who has found any length of time on a trolley pleasant – I just can't get there.

Ok, what this motion seeks to do is to highlight the Congress agenda and the Executive Council Report. Congress is right I believe when it says health is now in need of the same attention as the economy was in 1987. So in supporting this motion, in supporting the Executive Council Report on Health, we also want you to support the establishment of this Health Forum and we all need to become active and be honest and open in that Health Forum. If we want a quality assured public health service we have to have accountability for those who work within it as long as they are given the tools and so on. So in that since the Health Forum should begin straight away. However, one final point President. When we are beginning that Health Forum and we must be open and inclusive and honest and everything in our deliberations in that Health Forum, it is slightly disconcerting that you have such a major shift in health care policy delivery concerning the announcement of co-located hospitals going on and at the same

time the same Government is asking us to be open and honest and so on. They should halt the delivery of those private co-located hospitals until we have had this Health Forum, until we have had an open debate and until you entrust and they entrust a quality world class public health service to public servants with all the standards and with all the equality assurance that the patient requires. I commend this motion to you. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Is it formally seconded? Yes. Do we have a speaker to formally second.

Louise O'Reilly, Services, Industrial & Professional Trade Union

Louise O'Reilly, SIPTU speaking in support of Motion 65. Brothers and Sisters, as a representative for workers in the Irish health service, I see every day the two-tier health system in action. Chronic and decade long underfunding of our health service has resulted in what the Minister for Health has herself called a national emergency. This Government should be ashamed of the way in which our public health services have been destroyed, and the manner of its destruction has been illustrated for Congress by Wren and Tussing in the book entitled "*How Ireland Cares*". The fact that this Government looks to the market to sort out any problems in the health service and further looks to take on what it calls 'vested interests' so that they can be seen by the general public to be taking action should be a matter of concern to every person in this room. The threat of privatisation is ever present and if we are to believe what we read in the papers it is the only way to provide a decent public health care system. How, I ask you, will investments in the private sector improve the public health service. The answer quiet simply is it won't. And not only is this illustrated in the report but we can see in this report the ammunition with which we as trade unionists can fight this sin. And, be under no illusions we will need ammunition because this is an ideological war. Our members and those who need rather than can afford health care, are depended on us. We are less we forget the largest civil society group in this country and we should not be afraid to use this power to defend our health service and to demand that health care be a right and not a privilege. We need to be clear. Health care providers who provide care on a For Profit basis don't do it for the good of their health or for the good of yours or mine. When health becomes a business it is the poor and vulnerable who will suffer. When private patients need costly treatment which are not profitable we will see them in public hospitals. Co-location will not provide us with a solution to the bed crisis. It will simply cement the two-tier system which already exists in this country. Delegates, I urge you not only to support this motion and to give Congress the mandate to act on the recommendations contained in this report, but to read this report and to use the information in it to counter this sin and lies which seeks to deceive us in to thinking that private business interests will look after our health. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you very much Louise. Can I invite Amicus to move the amendment please.

Colm Quinlan, Amicus Unite

President, delegates, Colm Quinlan, Amicus Unite moving the amendment to Motion 65. Motion 65 addresses reform in the health service. This amendment is intended to be provided to prevent an erosion of what we have now. Although half the population in this country are covered by private health insurance not because they want luxury, they are confined to hospital, rather because they are afraid that if subscribers or their families are required to go in to a hospital the health service cannot provide the services that they require. Private health insurance in Ireland is underwritten by community rating. And, in simple terms, Community Rating means that as you get older, progressively older, your subscription remains the same. To achieve Community Rating in a competitive environment you must have Risk Equalisation. No country in the world has the competitive environment Community Rating without Risk Equalisation. Community Rating and Risk Equalisation is a mahatma to profit driven private companies. Sean Quinn is not interested in charging the same price for a premium to somebody who is older and more likely to have a claim as he is to charge a younger person. Neither is Dermot Desmond of Vivas. Bupa in Ireland were not 'Not for Profit'. Bupa in Ireland left when their profit, their super profit holiday was over and they got out of the market with a large chunk of profit. They still owe a lot of money to the Risk Equalisation fund and defacto too VHI who have been the beneficiaries of such a fund. An interesting point to note is that Bupa have a Supreme Court Appeal on and pending that appeal they do not pay interest penalties on the money owed and it is estimated, and we have been advised, that the interest generated on the monies owed will more than fund the cost of the Supreme Court hearing. So in effect VHI who without the benefit of that interest, VHI, owned by the Department of Health are funding Bupa's appeal against the Department of Health to the Risk Equalisation decision of the High Court. So that is what 'For Profit' practice brings to the private sector insurance situation. We believe that VHI must remain as a 'Not For Profit' provider of private health insurance. We are committed to VHI staying in state hands and no more. We have a voice in dealing with VHI and we have a voice in dealing with the Government through *Towards 2016*. I would urge you delegates to vote in favour of this amendment to make that voice louder.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Ok. Have we a seconder to the amendment? Formally seconded. No issue with the amendment? Can I put the amendment then. All those in favour, any

against, and any abstentions? Ok, can I put the motion then as amended. All those in favour, against, abstentions. Again that is carried unanimously.

We move then to the next Motion, 66. Again, Fintan, before you come to the rostrum, if we were giving out penalty points for all the breaches of the red light there is a lot of you that would be going home with a lot of violations this afternoon. So can we again heed the light, thanks.

Fintan Hourihan, Irish Medical Organisation

In addressing this motion I want again to begin by highlighting the fact that this is an issue that affects primary care as much as hospitals and bear in mind that primary care includes general practice, mental health services and care for the elderly. Primary care comprises 20 million consultations in GP surgeries every year. And that's in contrast to over one million admissions to acute hospitals. There are no waiting lists to see the GP. The service is pretty much a same day service and patients are treated equally regardless. But there are very clear signs that the HSE is courting the corporate sector to move in to primary care. This cannot be allowed happen as it will mean the gradual erosion of the medical card scheme and with echoes of the dangers that public hospitals will become ghettos for the disadvantaged, the abandonment of medical services for public patients holding medical cards. We have seen the privatisation of care for the elderly as clearly shown that there are serious flaws in a model which expects the HSE to monitor standards in terms of care for the elderly while at the same time purchasing care on a competitive tender basis, trying to get care at the cheapest possible price.

I think the most damning indictment of the drive towards outsourcing and privatisation lies in the fact that the mental health services were not even considered in the whole co-location debate, or indeed in relation to the Treatment Purchase Fund. While we believe that capacity for both acute hospitals and mental health services ought to be built within the public sector, it is telling that mental health services were completely ignored when both these initiatives were being launched. And, I would suggest that any model of reform of services in the community of the acute hospital sector should be measured against one simple test – will this change also benefit psychiatric patients and clients.

Turning to the proposed co-location scheme I want to say as was said earlier, that we remain opposed what is now being proposed and is being signed off as I understand by the board of the HSE as we speak, we do welcome the recognition that more hospital beds need to be provided, we don't advocate co-location as the means to deliver this extra capacity, it is there is the Programme for Government and it is going to be rolled out. It is important to say that the case for co-location has not been proven and in our view it is no coincidence that there was never a White Paper or a Green Paper produced on what is the most

radical departure from the existing hybrid model of care in the history of the state. And, I personally believe that that case will be never be proven.

We will continue to work with Congress in arguing the case against the proposed model and I want to thank the General Secretary and the President for all of the work they have put into working and making sure that health is top of the agenda and we are going to continue that work with the Forum. Can I just say very quickly because I am looking at the clock here, that if the Government proceeds with co-location, then at the very least we will propose that the state should acquire part ownership of any hospitals developed on sites owned by the state and or where the state funds a significant part of the infrastructure through for instance tax concessions. The voluntary 'Not For Profit' model has a history of success in voluntary hospitals and in the Endow Charitable Trust in the US and if that model is adopted then I think we should look seriously at how that can contribute to increasing capacity in the public hospital system.

It is important to remember that as public patients who suffer most because of the lack of acute hospital capacity and any new facility should operate a single waiting list for all patients. We believe there should be a single waiting list, that capacity should be focussed on providing protective space for elective care and the planned management of chronic disease.

In summary we are clear that outsourcing and privatisation in the community and in hospitals will have only one clear outcome – a worse deal for public patients and a gradual erosion of our public hospitals, hospitals that we should be proud to support and demand that they be developed as a priority. Please support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Seconder please.

Noel Traynor, Irish Nurses Organisation

President, delegates, Noel Traynor, Irish Nurses Organisation getting my kicks from supporting Motion 66. The political reality is that whatever the mandate we have a neo-liberal institute in the Ministry of the Department of Health & Children in Dublin. My particular paranoia is that criticisms of public service provision grease to her mill contrary to what Michael Scanlan stated earlier. Often organisations like our own have to highlight deficiencies in the system to attract resources where they are needed but it will be argued by those neo-liberals that it suits their purpose to allow the perception of deterioration of services whether rooted in fact or otherwise, so the paranoia will be that it comes to pass that a populist solution will be a radical privatisation scheme furthering tax breaks to entice multi-nationals and that eventuality is to horrible to contemplate. It was suggested earlier that private hospitals are not in competition with public

hospitals in the same way as I say Count Dracula is not in competition with the necks that bites at midnight. The deliberate disassociation for the service from the Government in the Republic in the form of the HSE far from being a mechanism for efficiency has become a hand washing exercise, or a phrase I heard earlier, it allows the Government plausible liability. You will be astonished to say that in summation that a coherent world class health service with equitable access can only be delivered in the context of an appropriately funded public health service. Thank you. Support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Other speakers.

Terry Casey, Medical Laboratory Science Association

President, delegates, Terry Casey speaking on behalf of the Medical Laboratory Science Association representing nearly 2,000 medical scientists who work in public hospital laboratories. Just to advise delegates your medical scientist is the health professional who analyses your blood, urine and tissue samples to aid in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Having pushed ahead with the co-location of private hospitals on public land, the Health Service Executive is now seeking to outsource essential clinical services. In May, 2007 the board of the HSE enthusiastically endorsed the plan by the National Hospitals Office to allow private sector companies to tender for the future provision for laboratory services that are currently provided and delivered by public hospital laboratories. To add insult to injury it is suggested that these private companies could be facilitated in co-locating their laboratories on public hospital sites. We wonder will they be afforded the same tax breaks as afforded to the companies for the co-location on public lands. The outcome of the HSE's unilateral plans to rationalise and outsource laboratory services will mean a significant loss of jobs for scientific staff whose facility to find professional employment is extremely limited outside of the public sector. Such shoddy treatment of health professionals cannot and will not be tolerated by this union and we will look for your support, delegates, in facing the challenge of the HSE's ill-thought out plan head on.

As David Begg informed the Taoiseach yesterday, health service unions are committed to embracing necessary change in order to improve our health services. Over many years medical scientists have been drivers of technological and scientific advancement within the pathology laboratories and have strongly recognised the need for change in order to meet the needs for a growing and changing population. But it is our view, delegates that the reform can and must be delivered within the public health system in order that the benefits of that system, of that modernisation accrue to the public health service rather than private shareholders. I commend the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you very much indeed. Any other speakers to 66?

Jack Kelly, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Jack Kelly supporting the Motion 66, from SIPTU. Our opposition to co-location, Chairman, is not driven by ideology. The private sector has been heavily involved in the provision of health services in this state for decades. General Practitioners services are provided by the private sector, consultant services, indeed private beds exist in public hospitals which our members serve to those patients without distinction. The Blackrock Clinic, the Bon Secure, Mount Carmel, Mater Private are all private sector providers. The Religious and other 'Not For Profit' groups have for years been involved in the provision of hospital services to Irish people. We have worked very well with these bodies, service providers, sometimes with difficulty but largely to very good effect. Clearly our objection to co-located hospitals is not based on ideology. What is then is our objection to co-location proposals. Let me set out some of the reasons. There are either enough beds in the service or not enough beds in the service, in the public health system. We believe that the HSEA says there is not, we believe that there is. Sorry, I think I said that wrong, I better say that again. There either is or there is not a shortage of beds in the public health system. We believe there is, the HSEA says there is not. If there is not why the state giving land through the tax is incentive to private corporations to build additional beds capacity on public land close to existing public hospitals. If there is a shortage why is the state not building the capacity itself. The Minister said that once these hospitals are built no private patients will be treated in the public hospitals. If this is the case, Chairman, two questions arise. One, how will the 700 million shortfall in the revenue that will be lost to the public hospitals sector be made up. So far the state has not said it will replace these funds. It is possible that the shortfall would be made up through cost reduction which normally means job losses, pay reductions, outsourcing and cuts in workers' benefits. If the beds are not needed, as Professor Drumm says, will there be the use or a means of centralising services and closing local hospitals. A second concern is if the state wants additional capacity for private patients why is it insisting on bringing international corporations into the health service. It is clear that other models might be used. I'll finish up Chair. Just one thing, Chair, just make one thing clear. The announcement made today that six hospitals, six corporations will be picking up six of the hospitals in the country, and we met with three of them. And I can tell you now that one of the providers that got three of the hospitals, you will hear it tonight, have made it clear that they don't want the trade unions around the place. They made it clear that they talk to their own employees and as far as I'm concerned that is a recipe for disaster. Thanks Chair, sorry for holding you up.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

No problem. Are there any other speakers on 66? If there is not can I put 66 to the floor. All those in favour please show, against, abstentions. That's carried unanimously. Linda are you moving 67? Can we move then to Motion to 67, A Fairer Society.

Linda Tanham, MANDATE

Linda Tanham, MANDATE trade union moving Motion 67. President, delegates, as previous motions have indicated the share of wealth going towards capital as opposed to labour has been increasing. The rising tide is failing to lift all ships. There are thousands of our citizens who are being denied some basic provisions which are education, housing and health. There are also the majority of private sector workers who are not in pension schemes, therefore placing them in danger of poverty in retirement. At the same time billions of euros are being transferred to those already doing nicely through tax credit transfers from schemes such as SSIs, Section 23 allowances etc. If the same revenue transfers were applied to the provision of social housing the waiting lists would be eliminated. Delegates, workers on low pay deserve more than lip service. We are calling on ICTU to work with us to genuinely address the needs of lower paid workers. The question is one of priorities. We ask delegates that you support a fairer and more equitable society. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and President of Congress

Thanks very much Linda. Secunder please.

Evelina Savuikyte, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Evelina Savuikyte, SIPTU supporting the motion. President, delegates, according to Eurostat, Ireland has the second highest average minimum wage in the EU, second only to Luxemburg. But the cost of living in Ireland is among the highest as well. The minimum wage in Ireland is now €8.65 an hour from 1 July, so for someone working just 39 hours a week, that's roughly €17,500 a year. How many of us could afford to eat and dress ourselves and get a mortgage or pay for childcare? Well lucky enough because we can wear the same clothes all year round here, yet in the last week Bank of Ireland CEO, earned just under €4 million in the last twelve months, that's euros not my currency. According to Bank of Ireland annual report a person on the minimum wage could not live enough of his own life to earn just one fifth of that or cat's world that would just be telling lies. So what is fair about one man earning €4 million and another person just earning €17,500 a year? What is fair about the price of rent the same as someone's minimum wage? Apart from the minimum wage the rates of pay of many vulnerable workers like agricultural labourers are determined by Joint Labour Committee Employment Regulation Orders but many migrant

workers have been exploited by unscrupulous employers seeking to cut wages and undermine even the basic conditions of employment laid down by JLCs. We all know as well that property prices in Ireland the profit developers made, but we all know as well how many migrants work still on €10 an hour or even less than that. My own union, SIPTU, has exposed and portrayed many of these abusers. For example, you all probably know the story about Latvians and the mushroom pickers who were awarded compensation totalling over €300,000 after they were unfairly sacked after joining SIPTU. Nevertheless, they never got a penny of this because the cheque just bounced. I don't think it's fair and neither do they. To prevent things like this in the future, my own union is involved in a campaign to organise mushroom workers like those vulnerable pickers. I myself am proud to say that I visited every boreen in Ireland to visit to all the farms. It's not easy, it is sometimes only three or two workers on one farm but it has to be done. So, up to date now we have more than 400 workers joined SIPTU. With this we have agreed to implement a legal binding agreement with employers to protect these exploited workers. We are all aware of a two-tier health system which operates in Ireland but we will soon have two-tier labour force with immigrants from Eastern Europe in particular occupying the lower tier. Instead of rising tide lifting all boats, the boat carrying low paid workers can get washed away by that same tide. Go raibh maith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Any other speakers to 67? I am going to call the vote on 67. All those in favour please show, against, abstentions. That's carried unanimously. Can we move then to 68, the GSU to move. Anybody in the hall from the GSU? If not the motion falls and I am going to move to Motion 69 in the name of the IMO on the CPI, Fintan.

Fintan Hourihan, Irish Medical Organisation

Thank you President. This is a very technical motion. At one level the intent and motivation behind it, because I know it will be opposed, is purely a public health measurer. I should I suppose say at the outset that we welcome the fact that England has now followed the example which was set by Ireland, the IMO and Mandate and many other unions who were instrumental in bringing in the smoking ban and I think it's a measure of its success that nobody even queries it anymore and this motion is intended to build on that success to try and prevent the escalation of addition to tobacco. Because tobacco is a leading cause of preventable disease causing cancers and has reproductive effects such as foetal death, still birth, reduced fertility, low birth weight and pregnancy complications. Smoking also contributes to poverty, disadvantage and inequality and from a purely economic perspective has implications in terms of lost productivity and health care costs. It is established that three quarters of smokers want to quit with price being the first reason. Two thirds of smokers and ex-smokers say they wouldn't have started with today's prices. Price rises or increases in taxes on

tobacco products result in a decrease in consumption. We acknowledge that the problem with using taxation for public health gain or that it is linked with the CPI which in turn contributes to inflation. It is regressive and it can increase smuggling.

Just to conclude, while it is argued that taxation on tobacco products would be regressive affecting the poor more than the rich, the regressive nature would be offset by increases in health due to reduced tobacco consumption by ring fencing greater revenue to invest in smoking cessation, to support smokers to quit and by allowing investment in services that particularly benefit the poor. Like said this motion is intended purely as a public health motion, it is not intended to have an impact on wage negotiations and that point will be made in anticipation of the opposition. So, I just want to say that this motion is very much intended to bolster public health, to build on the success of the smoking ban in the workplace. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you. Is there a seconder for the motion. Ok, Manus.

Manus O’Riordan, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Manus O’Riordan, SIPTU requesting the remission of this motion. Mr President and delegates, I do not doubt for a moment that this motion was framed with the best of motives and I myself speak as a lifelong non-smoker, grateful that health & safety legislation has protected me against passive smoking in the workplace. But smokers are not criminals. Tobacco is not a banned substance and such expenditure constitutes a legitimate component of the cost of living. It is also a fact that such expenditure forms a higher proportion of the total for lower paid income earners. It follows that lower paid are disproportionately hit by increases in tobacco excise duty. This is not an argument against such duties nor either further adjustments under more favourable circumstances whenever after tax pay, particularly that of the lower paid, would be way ahead of the rate of inflation. But in circumstances where the index is presently increasing at an annualised rate above the pay increases provided for in the second year of *Towards 2016*, the Minister for Finance had the brass neck to call on trade unionists to ignore the fact that his excise duty increases in this year’s budget, that .4 per cent to the CPI and pitched it into its currently unacceptable range of five per cent. Indeed it was no accident that the same budget speech made no mention whatsoever of what in fact is the only agreed measure of inflation in Ireland, the Consumer Price Index. Removal of tobacco products from that index would only be the thin end of the wedge in what is now sustained campaign to undermine the very fairness of that index. Do go with Damien Kibird of the Sunday Times attacking our movement as follows, quote: “Ireland’s inflation problem could be cured with the stroke of a pen. Brian Cowan should take advantage of the fact that the general election is over by excluding mortgage

interest from the Consumer Price Index. This would bring down year on year rate of inflation to 2.6 per cent effectively negating claims by Congress's David Begg that real living standards are being driven down by runaway inflation". Well, well, but it is in fact such proposed doctoring of the index that constitutes the great lie. Neither mortgage interest payments nor the price of cigarettes can be wished away from the real cost of living and perhaps we should return to a previous practice where we spoke interchangeably of the Consumer Price Index and the Cost of Living Index as being one and the same thing. We need to have an unambiguous message coming out of this Conference – hands off the CPI and that is not a party political slogan. I would therefore ask the IMO to remit this motion to the Executive Council with the assurance that Conference fully shares his concern that there be indeed a sustained campaign to halt the rise of tobacco addiction. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & President of Congress

Thank you. So our remission is moved. Speaker on with a remission from the Executive Council.

Shay Cody, IMPACT

Shay Cody, Executive Council supporting remission. The last budget substantially increased tax on cigarettes and in his budget speech the Minister said he would have raised it more but from opposition from the unions. That's not the case. There were no discussions, there was no dialogue, Congress met the Minister before the budget and it wasn't raised by either side. The trade unions, and in particular our colleagues in MANDATE, were at the forefront of the campaign to eliminate smoking from the workplace. We continue to support efforts to eliminate smoking but the Executive Council believes this motion is misguided. CPI is the measure of price increase in consumer goods and services and cigarettes represent four per cent of consumer expenditure in this area. In May the CPI was five per cent but at the same time the CPI excluding tobacco products was 4.7 per cent. Figures are also available for the CPI excluding mortgage payments or energy products produced by the Central Statistics Office on a monthly basis.

In France and Belgium following negotiations with trade unions there is a legal requirement to use the non-tobacco sub index of CPI for wage indexation. If that is what the IMO was seeking they should have brought forward a different motion. On a monthly basis they get a CPI index excluding tobacco products but we believe the motion is misguided as a result.

One final point – if the intention is to allow for a once off major increase in tobacco taxes, removing tobacco from the CPI has no long term affect because the CPI measures increases on the monthly or annual basis, it doesn't measure price levels. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and President of Congress

Fintan, they are seeking your permission to remit, I didn't say you were entitled to come back up and share with Conference your view.

Fintan Hourihan, Irish Medical Organisation

Funny enough President, I'm not sure I fancy my chances. Just to say and to credit the other speakers, I mean there was an acknowledgement that the motivation behind it is a public health one and on Shay's last point, the CPI without tobacco was being used for economic, was achieved in France in 1991 and the reason we didn't put it in was because it would have been ruled out of order and would have been referred to a separate Conference for delegates in the Republic of Ireland only so that is the reason why.

So, on the basis that I think I can read the writing on the wall Chairman, I would be happy to have this remitted back.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and President of Congress

I promise that I won't share with the Minister for Health that there are certain circumstances in which you would surrender so easily. Is Conference in favour of remission? Is that agreed? Ok, thank you.

That concludes that section except to ask Conference to approve the section of the Executive Council Report, Section 6 on Health Care. Is that agreed? Ok.

In accordance with Standing Orders Report No. 6, I think, we are now going to go back and take business that was outstanding from yesterday. So, if Billy Halligan is in the hall I think he has been waiting to give us the result of the elections. Is he? Who is it? Oh, he is here.

Billy Halligan, Public Services Executive Union

President, Billy Halligan, PSEU on behalf of the Scrutinisers with the result of the three elections.

The first election is the election of Vice President of the Executive Council for 2007-2009. The total vote cast was 494, there were no spoilt votes. Jack O'Connor, 415 votes, Michael O'Reilly, 79 votes. So I declare Jack O'Connor elected.

The second election, President, is in respect of the Executive Council Reserve Seat for the Local Panel Member. The total vote in that election was 531, there

were no spoilt votes. Colm Cronin, 109, Eric Fleming, 422 votes. So Eric Fleming is elected.

The next election is the election of the Standing Orders Committee. Now in this case each vote was assigned a value of a 1,000 to facilitate transfers. What I propose to do Chair is to give the first count of each candidate and then the count on which the person was elected or eliminated.

The total vote was 520,000 giving a quota of 86,667. Campfield, 54,000, elected on the sixth count. Kelly, 174,000, elected on the first count. Maher, 95,000 elected on the first count. O'Meara, 55,000 elected on the second count. Sharp, 70,000 elected on the second count. Thompson, 33,000 eliminated on the seventh count and becomes the first reserve. Trimball, 39,000 eliminated on sixth count. Thank you President.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and President of Congress

Thank you very much. Ok. Thanks very much for that report Billy. As I said we are now going to go back to business that we were scheduled to take yesterday starting with Motion 17. Before I ask the mover of 17 to come forward, can I ask Peter Sands on behalf of the Retired Members Group as he was due to speak before this debate yesterday and I am just going to invite Peter to come forward and speak briefly to the Conference cause he is here on behalf of the Retired Workers Group and has been waiting for the opportunity to address you with the reflections of that group and while he is making his way to the platform can I ask you to join with me in congratulating Peter, he has just been elected as a Senator by the Taoiseach for the duration of the Senate Elections.

Peter Sands, Congress Retired Workers Committee

Thank you very much Mr President for your kind remarks. If I may say so it was a complete surprise to me when I got the call on last Friday evening week, as I was trying to tidy up the house, from Brussels. I couldn't believe it. But it was typical of the way this man operates and he decided in his own way to give recognition to the many years that I have given of service in many walks of life and he thought that I should get recognition and that's the way he decided to do it. And I think it is fair to say that me being selected is typical of the real Bertie Aherne the way he does things not the way that he is being portrayed in a lot of places.

Mr President and delegates, first I want to thank you President and the Executive Council and the General Secretary for your invitation to address this Biennial Conference on behalf of the Retired Workers Committee. I wish to put on record that the Retired Workers Committee fully endorses Motion 17 in the name of the Executive Council on the Pension Policy. While pensions is not the only issue of importance for older people, issue like health care, housing, transport,

discrimination, employment and many others exercise our minds and are on our agenda. However, income is a very important part of a pensioner's wellbeing. Without adequate income older people cannot participate in the economy with any dignity and have access to goods and services that the rest of the community enjoy. The Executive Council motion clearly points out as determined by the European Commission, the large number of older people that are at risk of poverty and this is unacceptable, unnecessary and a reproach to the social conscientious of a modern economy. These words should be repeated over and over again – unacceptable, unnecessary and a reproach to the social conscientious of a modern economy. Action now needs to be taken on the pension's issue. Our view, President, is that this must be done through a combination of many factors. A mandatory second tier pension with contributions from workers, employers and Government is one of the ways forward but it is not the only way. There must also be a development of the first tier pension scheme. Pension policy must not only deal with the future generation of pensioners, it must also deal with the present generation of pensioners in their community and in a dignified way. We ask all the affiliated unions of Congress to work in solidarity with pensioner organisations in Ireland, North and South to be a voice them in implementing the provision of the social partnership agreement which if implemented will greatly enhance the quality of life for older people.

I have been Secretary of the Retired Workers Committee now for at least twenty years and over that time we have had many frustrations about the structure and funding of the Committee but I want to acknowledge and welcome the commitment of Congress to commit additional resources to strengthen the work of the Retired Workers Committee and we appreciate the assistance of Sally Anne Kinahan, Assistant General Secretary and Michael O'Halloran who helped to negotiate and secure those extra resources.

The Retired Workers Committee recognises that there have been improvements in the state pension contributory and non-contributory over the last number of years. But these improvements were from a very low base. We now need to bring about a level of pension that is based on the average industrial earnings of workers. The Pension Board recognises that this should be at the level of 40 per cent. We in the Retired Workers Committee must aim our sights higher. We believe that those living in retirement should be entitled to at least 50 per cent of average industrial earnings. People in Ireland are living longer. This has been one of the achievements in health and social conditions and this should be a cause of celebration. We still have a favourable demographic situation in Ireland compared to our European partners. While the ageing of the population presents us with many challenges, it also presents us with opportunities. There is an opportunity in the technology industry to develop technology that will assist older people to live a life of independence in their own homes and not only should we be planning to make use of these technologies, we should also be planning to be one of those who manufacture them and export them abroad for the use of others.

Now, Mr President, I want to go back a little bit in the history to the year of 1986 at the ICTU Conference that was then held in Belfast. You President on behalf of the Local Government Public Services Union made Motion No. 7 at the Conference entitled: Pay Bargaining. And while we did not just ask for pay bargaining in isolation but in the format of a national understanding, I had the great honour of seconding this motion, so I have been around for a while. In addressing the motion you made a couple of important points that still need to be made over and over again. And at this point I want to remind the delegates of the background to the Ireland that we had at time and what we had in Ireland. You pointed that the problems we faced then were unemployment, particularly young unemployment and the low paid and the downtrodden and you stated very clearly, that they looked to this movement, the great trade union movement for hope. You went on to say, no amount of rhetoric, jargon or repeated repetition of strategies which are frozen in time regardless of the changed conditions, will impress our or help them and for that reason our union at that time was moving that motion. Much has been achieved since that time through Social Partnership. Successive partnership agreements have pushed out the means of the trade union movement influencing broader issues than just pay. Mere money on its own is not the only thing that gives us a good standard of living. This was recognised at a very early stage in the trade union movement. And I, as I often was, a delegate at conferences was struck by the fact that we passed many fine motions about economic and social policy but did not have the means of influencing. Social Partnership has given us that means. We were delighted last year that we participated in the Social Partnership negotiations through our involvement with Congress and also with the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, who are now recognised as Social Partners and are directly involved in the negotiations which led to *Towards 2016*. The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament is an organisation which the Retired Workers Committee helped to found and it is now one of the biggest voluntary organisations in Ireland with an affiliated membership of 100,000. We believe that the instrument of Social Partnership must now be used in a way that it was used so effectively in dealing with other economic and social issues, to bring a standard of social living to other people in retirement that will give them the dignity and independence that justice demands.

As the Retired Workers Committee we are also interested in the struggle for inter-generational justice and solidarity because we are parents and grandparents and our family's future is our concern. Their future requires a greater investment in health education, employment and childcare, the list is endless. But it requires that we are willing to pay for these services and only has to look at page 119 of the Executive Council report, and there is another motion, I think it is Motion No. 32, and you can clearly identify that the countries which have the best social services have also been willing to pay for them. Mr President, delegates, if we want to improve social services they will have to be paid for. Money input alone did not meet our needs. For a quality standard of living we also need a social wage for this purpose. As already pointed out it is by

no accident or coincidence that those who have the best social services for the old, for sick, for the young, for the education of our people and all the other services that go to make up what used to be called the social wage have them because they have a taxation system that makes it possible. Countries like Denmark are a contradiction in terms of what we hear from those right wing economists on a daily basis and now seem to be dominating the media as the only spokesperson on the economy. Denmark has a high level of employment, high productivity, high social services but it also has hand in hand with that a high taxation system. It has a successful economy but it has also a successful social system. Dealing with taxation in particular difficult as it may have consequences at the ballot box for political parties but it is an issue that needs to be debated as a mechanism to improve social services in order to raise our standards of living and I believe there is a role for the trade union movement to initiate a debate on tax and to bring light to this subject when all we have at the moment is dark clouds being created by certain economists who are greatly darkening the understanding of the development of social services. Unfortunately, the general election results seems to have shown that the people, not only some political parties, have chosen Boston rather than Berlin. We need to change this thinking and the trade union movement had proved in the past its great ability to be a social conscientious for the downtrodden and therefore has a role to play in this. We in the Retired Workers Committee want to be part of that role and anything the Retired Workers can do to assist Congress Executive to initiate a debate on this issue will be done but in this regard we also wish that all affiliated unions to Congress, if they have not already done so, develop a Retired Workers sections to enable people, many of whom have been very active in their unions, to continue to play a constructive role on their behalf and on behalf of the whole community.

Mr President, I want to congratulate you on your term of office and the many things you have achieved. We were delighted that Congress showed such great leadership in the dispute with Irish Shipping and SIPTU. This was just one of the examples where we feel that the trade union movement was at its very best.

In conclusion Mr President, I am reminded of the words of Aristotle, "Society is not just for life, it is for the good life". The Retired Workers Committee wants a good life not only for only people but for all our people. Our challenge is to develop that type of society and this also has been the tradition and historic role of the trade union movement – to remind society that we owe something to human beings because we are human beings, and therefore the most important wealth we can have is the wealth of working to promote herein values and justice in our society. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and President of Congress

Thanks very much Peter. Can I now move to Motion 17 and call Rosheen to move that on behalf of the Executive Council please. Just while Rosheen's doing

that, Peter will you convey our best wishes to all your colleagues on the Retired Workers Committee. Thank you.

Rosheen Callender, SIPTU & Vice President

I am very pleased to be moving this motion on pensions. The motion itself sums up where we are now at in relation to pensions and on pages 71-74 of your Executive Council Report you will find a more detailed update on developments in the last two years.

When I first started working on pensions in the mid 70s, I suppose the challenges seemed straightforward and by comparisons with today, they were. The challenges were to get the state pension up to decent levels and then to build on that state pension with occupational pensions to supplement it wherever we could. We talked about introducing and improving pension schemes in those days and we had very major successes with that agenda because throughout the 70s and 80s we got steady improvements in both public and private sector pension schemes and we negotiated literally hundreds of new occupational schemes almost invariably on a Defined Benefit basis. And it was in the late 80's I suppose when Defined Contribution schemes started making their way on to the pensions landscape here in Ireland as a way of controlling employers' costs, that the issue of quality and adequacy of pensions really came to the fore as distinct from extending coverage of pension schemes. And there were various other adverse developments then in the 1990s which you know all about which in recent years have placed us in a position where our old dual objectives of simply increasing coverage and improving adequacy weren't the only challenges and had become more difficult challenges. They were joined then by the very pressing issue of defending the hard way won gains of earlier decades and protecting the integrity of all those good schemes we had negotiated over those years.

I do think that as a result of the trade union movement giving this protection against erosion issues such high priority over the last couple of years and particularly in last year's talks on the national agreement, but also because employers have chosen the ground rather badly when making the running here in areas where greed rather than need was the driver of change. I think we are now starting to see some very significant positive developments in that area and I refer of course to the introduction, the negotiations of the hybrid schemes which basically provide the main provisions of the schemes on a Defined Benefit basis still up salary level that covers the vast majority of the employees in the employment concerned with the additional benefits then being funded, provided on a Defined Contribution basis. And in very many cases this could be quite a fair and balanced way forward in cases where employees recognise the employers wish to plan and control pension costs for the future and where the employers recognise the workers legitimate desire to retain their good pension provision and where both sides are prepared to actually work for a solution. And

I think that the recent type of arrangements negotiated by Amicus, by IBOA, by SIPTU and some other unions as well, merit very careful examination by other people who might be in similar situations because, and I do believe the negotiators concerned should be applauded for finding a good fair and balanced way forward in very difficult circumstances. But I don't think that progress on the protection issue has yet been matched by any where near sufficient progress on our old issues of extending pensions coverage and improving adequacy because the state pension in the South is still less than a third of average industrial earnings and although the new Government has promised to increase it in monetary terms, we have no guarantee that that will bring it up to the 40 per cent of average industrial earnings which is our target and which was endorsed by a recent Pensions Board report.

That report on Mandatory Pensions, very important report which the Minister for Social Welfare, the then Minister, requested of the Pensions Board in February of last year and it was produced by him in a great hurry, very intensive work was done to get it out to him by June, but unfortunately it took him until August of last year when everyone was on holiday to publish it and has systematically swept it under the carpet ever since. And the same thing had happened the previous year's report, the National Pensions Review, in which unanimous recommendations were made by the Pension Board on ways of improving pension's coverage and that too was ignored by the Government in the context of last year's budget. Now I think it is time for us to say stop to this kind of procrastination and pussy-footing by Governments around the pension's issue. It is reminiscent of what happened in the 70s when Frank Cluskey published his Green Paper on National Income Related Pension Scheme and it was systematically suppressed by other Governments and in the end its death was announced in the mid 80s. Far too much time has gone by with Governments avoiding the need to face up to the pensions imperative and its costs and soon we are going to lose that last bit of demographic dividend that we have still in relation to other countries that are struggling with the same problems. The Green Paper that was requested that was agreed last year under the national agreement was prepared as requested, was ready last April for publication which was promised by Easter by the last Minister, and it has been languishing there ever since. We must put out a call from this Conference today that the new Minister should publish that paper straight away, act very swiftly on it and he should also get that other elephant out from under the carpet from his Department, the big report on Mandatory Pensions and get the Government to start looking at it and act on it and start taking it seriously.

So, I want a very strong call to go out from this conference to publish the Green Paper, look carefully at the report on Mandatory Pensions, act on the recommendations of the Pensions Board from the previous year which was to equalise and make fairer the tax system for people to get into pension schemes and to start working and to start work immediately on the costings etc that are needed in order to successfully introduce the mandatory pensions system where

the cost is equally shared between employees, employers and the state, the blueprint for which is there in last year's Mandatory Pensions Report. All the work has been done and it is time for action and I want a very strong call to go out from this Conference for early Government action to publish the Green Paper, act on the Mandatory Pension Report and the Report from the Pensions Board from the year before. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT and President of Congress

Have we a seconder? Formally seconded, yes. Any other speaker? If not, sure.

Carmel Kerrigan, Amicus

Mr President, delegates, my blue pencil pension, with the time constraints, to strongly support the Executive motion. There is no doubt that many older people will be at risk of poverty. Years of debate have seen visions to address this move backwards in the attempted demise of traditional occupational schemes and a fall in interest rates on investments. Thankfully, the future looks brighter and all party talks a priority for the present agreement and the promised Green Paper. My core point – adequate income is not sufficient if it does not go further than day to day outlay and that is a problem. I was very pleased to hear our General Secretary mention to the Taoiseach yesterday of the possibility of life long members of the VHI private health cover not being able to continue in membership due to its rising costs. Affordability is certainly questionable with only the state pension income. There will always be health requirements and treatments not covered by state schemes, particularly dental treatment. Homeowners are faced with wear and tear replacements. These are just two of the potential needs. For the state pension nothing short of 50 per cent of the average industrial wage, as indicated from research, is sufficient. That would amount to €300 per week. Now, not on a stepped basis from the present amount as promised in the lifetime of the present Government at five years. Vitally important also is the introduction of a mandatory second tier scheme from day one of employment to supplement the state scheme. Mandatory from the experience of a low uptake of a voluntary scheme. State income on retirement is not benevolent. It is deferred income from PRSI payments. So what is necessary is to have all pensions guaranteed by legislation.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to ...**large section of tape missing.**

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

That's carried unanimously. Can I now invite the movers and speakers on Motion 18. Its in the name of the IBOA, the PSEU, and the TEEU with an amendment from Amicus. Eamon.

Eamon Devoy, Technical Engineering Electrical Union

President, fellow delegates, Devoy, TEEU and with the agreement of the IBOA and PSEU I am moving Motion 18 and accepting the Amicus amendment.

Colleagues, there are about 1.7 million employees in the workforce in the South of Ireland and about half of those are in some form of pension scheme, so that will give you some idea of the significance of this motion. The attack by employers on pension schemes of workers has very little to do with pensions per say. Its part of an attack on the terms and conditions of employment of workers generally. As employers continue to sustain their profit in this global competitive environment, they look to their employees as a variable cost rather than a fixed cost and in so doing and they are in relentless pursuit to maintain and enhance their profits, attack the employment conditions of their own employees. Pensions are a fundamental part of our remuneration package and constitute deferred wages and must be defended. If this attack is allowed to continue unabated, then it is only a matter of time before other conditions including basic pay will be under attack.

And, there are another number of sinister aspects taking place in the workforce at the moment in relation to pensions. A number of employers are engaged in different forms of deceit in making proposals to their workforce that some aspects of change to their pension schemes would be good for them. For example, the inclusion of shift pay in the pension scheme while switching from Defined Benefit to Defined Contribution. Another one is the inclusion of career average schemes and the third one, the most common one, is the closure of DB schemes to new entrants. There are thousands of workers in the private sector affected by these issues, therefore, this attack cannot go unchallenged. In this context I am delighted to see our colleagues in the public sector supporting this motion here today.

So, colleagues, what can we do? We need to build a campaign of awareness amongst workers about this important issue. We also need to develop a strategy whereby we support workers who are prepared to defend their pension scheme before they are lost. The trade union movement in Ireland has a history of protesting after the event when jobs are lost or conditions are taken away. Lets for once do the right thing and the next time a group of workers go out to defend their pension scheme let us put the same time resources into supporting them as we do with so many lost causes and in doing so, hopefully, we can turn this ship around.

Colleagues, we are meeting here in Ulster and let us adopt a grand Ulster slogan where pensions are concerned. No Surrender. Support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Formally seconded, Tom.

Tom Geraghty, Public Services Executive Union

Tom Geraghty, PSEU seconding the motion. Just to say that in my time involved with trade unions there isn't any doubt that we've become much more professional in representing our members and in using procedures in putting cases together and so on but perhaps if we were self critical and it's probably no harm that we should be now and again, we are not always that good at spotting the wave that begins to build on the horizon gathers momentum and threatens to engulf us. And that is how I would characterise the problem that we are facing in relation to pensions. It began, or at least began to impinge to a significant extent with an increasing number of employments that have no pension provision whatsoever, no occupation pension provision whatsoever. Not coincidentally they tend to be non-unionised employments but the next phase then and this where it began to impinge on union members is when more traditional employments, traditional unionised employments, began to seek to dismantle their well established pension schemes citing the competitive pressures brought about by the fact that the people with whom they are competing aren't subjected to the same costs. And that is the phase we are in at the present time and there can be a tendency amongst our colleagues in the public sector to think that we can also be immune to these developments but we are already in the phase where some commentators instead of the crying of the lamentable state of affairs where increasing numbers of people are facing the prospect of having inadequate or no pension cover whatsoever, no occupational pension cover are actually using the current situation to start attacking the public service pension schemes so this is an issue that potentially affects every single member of the trade union movement. And there really is only one solution to it. There really are no choices. There is only one solution to it and that is to require that employments have, to require on a statutory basis that employments have pension cover. Now employers will baulk at that. Government will baulk at it and let's be honest some employees including some of the people we represent may very well baulk at it as well because there is a cost associated with that and obviously the employer won't want to pay the cost. Government will seek not to pay it and there will be some people will take a short sighted view who won't wish to contribute towards the cost themselves. But there is no other alternative. I mean we can come in and we can give out about employers and so on but there is no alternative. Unless we make provision on a statutory basis, compulsory pension cover, compulsory occupational pension cover, we will not be able to deal with this issue. And it is something that we need to give priority to. Frankly I believe that it is far more important than whether we get x per cent or x+y per cent out of national agreements. In the long run this is an issue that has consequences for every single member we represent so I urge you to adopt the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Larry.

Larry Broderick, Irish Bank Officials Association

Thank you very much President. Larry Broderick, General Secretary supporting the motion as amended. And, first of all, on behalf of IBOA, the financial union, could I just congratulate David Begg for his magnificent response to the Taoiseach yesterday on behalf of this Conference, setting out the real agenda for this movement going forward not Taoiseach's slip ups.

In terms of this particular debate colleagues – could I just say that at Government Buildings the key issue of pensions became a major issue for this movement. Indeed the resolution of *Towards 2016* included Article 8.3 which allowed for pensions issues in dispute to be referred to the National Implementation Body, an issue that was very much supported by many trade unions. Unfortunately, colleagues, as we were talking about *Towards 2016* we saw major employers such as Bank of Ireland, Irish Life & Permanent, Regional Newspapers moving at haste to not only close down Defined Benefit Schemes for existing staff but in particular to expose and look at damaging seriously pension provision for future staff. IBOA and Amicus high profiled dispute with Bank of Ireland around the time of the National Wage Agreement identified very clearly that employers look at new staff in total contempt. Indeed the refusal by Bank of Ireland to refer the unilateral introduction of the new pension arrangements pending negotiation smacked of corporate greed in its most extreme. What is disappointing is the mechanism of the National Implementation Body to address that issue in the forefront of corporate greed is also unacceptable. And in passing this motion colleagues, we must be clear that a consensus NIB body is going to address pensions. The only way we are going to address pensions is through campaigning. The attempt, broadly speaking, to introduce a two-tier pension arrangement must be resisted. As we have identified before we are still in dispute with Bank of Ireland in Amicus and in IBOA and this Conference needs to give a very, very clear message to employers generally and particularly Government and IBEC, and that message pensions or pay, leave our pensions alone. Support the motion. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Can I invite Jerry to formally move this motion which has been referred to and accepted.

Jerry Shanahan, Amicus Unite

I can move that probably move it Chair if you wouldn't mind, and echo obviously what Rosheen has said. Jerry Shanahan, Amicus Section Unite, and also to echo what Larry has said. I believe we have turned the corner in the campaigns we have run on pensions both in Amicus and the IBOA. We have reached significant agreements and major employers like Irish Life & Permanent, Hibernian, recently in AIB and Allianz and right across the finance sector. There isn't an area of the finance sector now that you do not have access to a Defined Benefit Scheme and next on the agenda I am sure will be Bank of Ireland with ourselves and the IBOA.

If I can simply explain because I have been asked to explain what our amendment means in reality. Many workers have what are called integrated schemes. In other words what they have is they have a pension that they pay into, the employer pays into and then with that they have the social welfare. And it's the combined value of what they pay in supplementary and the social welfare that provides their scheme. Now, what is happening as pension national or state pension is improving the value of the supplementary element is lessening but it's the employer that is getting the benefit from that. It is not being shared with the employee. You could actually technically arrive at a point where the state pension equals the combined value of the integrated and the supplementary scheme. So what people have to watch out for in negotiations is that as the state pension improves, because it has improved fairly substantially in the last short number of years, that the value of the difference with the supplementary element, that there is a sharing of that or and this is a simpler way to approach it from experience of doing these negotiations, reduce the value of the state pension in the integration. For example, if its one state pension at the moment reduced it to half. If it is one and a half times state pension it to one. And by following that sort of fraction and approach you will over time actually keep the value of the supplementary element and increase it as the state pension enhances. If I could move the amendment Chair. Thank you for your forbearance.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much indeed. Is this to speak on the amendment? Can I just get the amendment cleared first. Is the amendment acceptable to Conference? All those in favour, ok. Anyone against? Ok, its now open to speakers.

Unidentified Speaker

Delegates, I think one of the things we need to remember about pensions is that pension is a necessary cost of employment. A necessary cost. Its exactly like salary or like a payment of a social insurance policy. It's a cost that must be borne and business has always, and will always, attempt to drive down

employment costs and transfer those costs into profits and that is exactly what we are seeing here on this whole pension thing. What they are doing is they are attacking an employment cost and trying to divert it into profit. And the reason they are picking pension is because they think we will defend it less than we would defend salary or anything else. And I hope, I sincerely hope that that is untrue because I am not that happy with the notion of a hybrid between Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution, so I sincerely hope that we will defend the pension cost. And, the way they do it is they trot out the usual suspects to give us the same old clap trap about economic realities that we have heard for years back. The economic realities and when we hear people talking about economic realities we should ask them what reality. Whose reality are you talking about? Because there are no economic realities out there as if they existed independently of anything else, economic realities are constructs of political societies. We make the realities and we shouldn't accept it. And sometimes I hear public servants with almost apologetic attitude to the fact that we have Defined Benefit pensions and that we enjoy better conditions of work than there might be sometimes in the private sector. And sometimes you hear people in the private sector on the same thing and looking at us and saying that maybe you shouldn't have because the reality is, and again we come back to this reality that in the private sector we are getting the squeeze on this. Well look at its time we got off our knees and we say to people we won't apologise. I won't apologise for the kind of pension entitlements that we have. I will apologise to my members the day we lose those entitlements. Before that we should be off our knees and we should be singing about the kind of pension entitlements that we have that this trade union movement exists to create for all workers not just public service workers. So I hope that we are going to have a serious fight on this pension issue because it is the biggest threat that is facing us.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Is this on 18 as well? Ok.

Barry Nevin, Services Industrial Professional Technical Union

Mr President, delegates, Barry Nevin, SIPTU. Pension time bomb, that's a term we generally hear where there has been no provision made or there is an inadequate provision for a worker's pension. But I would put it to you that there is a pension's time bomb coming because of the Government's announcement in relation to the increase in pension of €100 to reach €300 in the lifetime of the Government. What that means is that's a €100 less now coming out of your pension. This is an issue very, very clearly for the state and semi-state sector due to coordination and integration of the schemes. And I will give you an example of this of some figures we have been working. Employees working in our company on fixed hour workers between 16 and 20 hours a week, we have done some figures over 20 years. They have generally been employed, they are more mature when they are employed, so roughly we went with 20 years

because that's all they would have in their contract before retirement. On retirement, with coordination they will have put in approximately over €60,000 into their pension scheme plus PRSI. How much do you think they are going to get on pension - €5. Now they are going to ask questions down the line because they think they are in a pension fund, they are hearing the message out there that you should get into a pension fund but they don't realise and a lot of workers when we pointed this out to them, with the increase in Government and the Social Welfare pension, that's €100 less of your pension. It's a very, very serious issue. I believe it's an issue for the next round of *Towards 2016*. I have spoken already to Dave Begg on it when we had a meeting a couple of weeks ago, Dave has said that we are waiting on the Green Paper which Rosheen spoke about. Hopefully there will be something on that and they are expecting that later on in the year. I have also raised with my own Executive in SIPTU and I appeal to all of you to go back and make this an issue in your own union with your own Executive, please support Motion 18, thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you very much. Can we take the vote on 18 as amended. All those in favour please show. Anyone against, any abstentions? It's carried unanimously. Can I invite UCATT now to move Motion 19.

And following this it's the University & College Union on Motion 20, so 19 please.

Gerry McKenna, Union of Construction Allied Trades

President, conference, Gerry McKenna, UCATT moving Motion 19. The purpose behind this motion is to attempt to start a process of harmonisation in pension schemes in the construction sector on this island. We would like both administrations, North and South, to recognise that there is potential for nearly 400,000 building workers to take part in occupational pension schemes. In the South we have the Construction Workers Pension Scheme. This scheme is mainly for all those employees in the construction industry who are covered under the Registered Employment Agreement. At present there is 91,000 active members, there is 120,000 deferred members and 700,000 pensioners. There is also a substantial death in service benefit scheme. We estimate that there is approximately 7,000 building workers who are debarred from entering into the pension on the grounds that Revenue have classified them as self-employed. And therefore Revenue will not allow them to participate in the occupational pension scheme. We look to the North and compare the Construction Benefit Scheme for employees who are not contributing into this scheme. There is no legal obligation on the employer to enter his employee into the scheme. The scheme is only open to members of the Construction Employers Confederation. The employer pays 3.5 per cent of the agreed salary into the Construction Benefit Scheme compared to a total contribution of 7 per cent is being paid into the Construction Workers' Pension. We reckon that 800 or 80,000 people

employed in the construction industry in the North and there are 13,000 active members and 8,300 have claimed pensions since the scheme's inception in 1982. Figures show that there are almost 400,000 people employed in the construction industry on these islands and just over 105,000 covered through the Occupational Pension Scheme. This means that just over 25 per cent of the workforce is in industrial specific pension schemes. We welcome the investment being made into the infrastructure project and the Titanic quarter of Belfast but one of the questions that must be asked is who is going to do the work and what provisions are going to be made for a decent pension for the workers on the sites? Government are going to continue to classify building workers as casual labour and therefore treat them as sole traders. The issue is not self employed as determined by Revenue. This will cause misery for many building workers in the future. Today a worker would be classified as sole trader therefore not entitled to partake in the pension scheme for the industry. Tomorrow he will be an employee and will be entitled to enter into the pension scheme. How can a building worker have a long term career in the industry with the hope of receiving a decent pension at the end of it. There is a large gap in the contributions because revenue deems them to be self-employed and employers fail to register them into the scheme.

We are seeking the introduction of a contributory pension scheme for building workers in Northern Ireland recognised by Revenue of the right of workers to be paid into the Registered and Occupational Pension Scheme for the construction industry. We are calling on Congress to start discussions with administrations North and South, the Construction Industry Federation, the Construction Employers Federation and the North South Ministerial Council with the view of exploring a possibility of registration of a cross-border occupational pension scheme under the EU Pension Directive. I move this motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much indeed Gerry. Is this to second and to speak? Yes, please.

Eric Fleming, Dublin Council of Trade Unions

Eric Fleming, Dublin Council of Trade Unions. I am a Trustee of the Construction Industry Pension Scheme in the South and I welcome the call for this discussion as it is extremely important for us that we protect this scheme. The scheme is legal, its part of a Registered Employment Agreement and from our point of view that should mean that everybody that works in the construction industry in the South is actually in membership of it. That's not the case. The scheme has been improved tremendously in the last couple of year. We discussed the motion in Belfast two years ago and actually passed it, that we were concerned with the progress that was been made with that scheme. That so many people were being left out of it and in order to try emphasise to the Government the importance of making sure that all building workers were in the scheme and were

in the scheme and were being paid up, that the Department of Social Welfare should take over the responsibility, not for the scheme but for the collection of contributions because the contributions that were being deducted from many of the workers were not being paid over by robbers, pension robbers, which we don't have any shortage of here in the Republic. I'm not too sure what it is like in the North but I can have a good guess.

The reason I would welcome this discussion is I do think we should have an equality of pensions between North and South but I also think that we should try and wipe out this problem that we have at the moment with many of the unscrupulous Northern contractors coming to the South and depriving their workers of membership of the scheme on the basis that they say that they have a scheme in the North but we know they don't. And we have learned that through some of the contracts up around the border where workers have died and they didn't get any benefits. This is a €63,000 death benefit for workers who are in that scheme and those people didn't get that and also there is a target objective of two-thirds of final pay for workers. So it is quite a good scheme and we are really interested in making sure that the scheme succeeds but we are very, very concerned, and I have to say by the way the last speaker troubled me a little bit when he spoke about the self-employed and the need to get them into the scheme. I agree with that. I agree with normal people who work as self-employed people being put into it, but if employers go out of their way and premeditatedly put something like 70,000 people outside of the loop by making them bogus self-employed. I have to say that I am a little bit wary about collaborating somewhat with making those people respectable. I personally believe the way around that is the Government has to make it quiet clear, we have made it clear to them, that those workers should not be classified as bogus self-employed. They are not self-employed at all but that they should be back directly working for employers and they should be properly looked after and put into that scheme. I welcome the discussion and I second the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok. If there are no other speakers can I put 19 to a vote. All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? Carried unanimously.

Can I now ask the UCU speaker to move Motion 20 on Public Sector Pensions. Thank you.

Monica Gallagher, University and Colleges Union

President, delegates, Monica Gallagher moving Motion 20 on behalf of UCU, the University and Colleges Union. Labour mobility helps labour markets by making it possible to put the right skills where the jobs are. It also increases the career and development opportunities of workers. This mobility is hindered without protection of the social security benefits of workers and their families. When

people recognise that changing jobs and moving jurisdiction will entail costs in terms of their social security rights, this acts as a disincentive and reduced the free movement of people. In my own sector which is the teaching and education sector, at present there are no arrangements for the transfer of pension credits from the scheme applicable to teachers in the Republic of Ireland to the scheme in Northern Ireland or the rest of the United Kingdom. This means that when teachers move from the Republic of Ireland to take up posts in the North they do not have the option to transfer their pension credits into the Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme. Similarly teachers from the Northern jurisdiction who move to take up teaching posts in the Republic also experience difficulties in transferring pension credits to the scheme in the South. Over the preceding years many hundreds of teachers have been disadvantaged because of this inability to transfer pension credits between the two jurisdictions in Ireland. The net result is that a teacher who moves between the two jurisdictions ends up with two small pensions and all the additional administrative hassle that this entails. People do loose out. We had one former member who fought for more than 20 years with the authorities in both jurisdictions to have his pension transferred but he got nowhere and as one of our more cynical or erudite members put it, he retired even more bitter and twisted than was his natural personality. Surely it would be better if pension credits could be transferred from one scheme or one jurisdiction to the other. Pensions should be portable. Over the past days we have heard a great deal about cross-border cooperation, an All Ireland economy, about the importance of integration not segregation but the current systems and regulations, particularly in the public sector, act as a barrier to mobility of labour. We seek the support of Congress to reignite this issue by pressing the Governments in both jurisdictions to address this issue not in a global or general manner but on a sectoral basis, health, education, local Government and so on. Congress please support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much. Is there a seconder, is there a formal seconder? Yes, ok. There is no speakers. Can I put that motion to a vote. All those in favour please show, anyone against, any abstentions? It is carried. Can I now invite the CWU to move Motion 21 on Employment Standards.

Steve Fitzpatrick, Communication Workers Union

Thank you President. Steve Fitzpatrick, Communication Workers Union. Motion 21 was born out of frustration during the last big Irish Ferries dispute. In some ways it was also born out of inspiration because I think that dispute and the demonstration organised by SIPTU and by ICTU really galvanised the trade union movement again. You intend to ask yourself what would you done if the demonstration hadn't worked, what more could ICTU have done, how could we have tackled those problems in a different way and it ended up with a debate in our union as to why we couldn't or wouldn't take some form of industrial action.

Would we be in a position to take some sort of a general stoppage and I don't think anyone is absolutely clear whether we could or not under the present structures. So this motion is trying to arm Conference, or to give Congress teeth in order to deal with issues that can't be dealt with easily by individual unions.

We heard earlier on today from Peter Sands an expression I haven't heard at Congress in many years, the social wage. And it is the area of our conditions that is under the greatest attack. We are happy to accept the amendment from IMPACT as it I think it strengthens the motion even further cause it looks at ways in which we can fight as a movement, whether politically through the legal system and maybe even financially. I am always taken with the idea that workers should use finance as their weapon to beat unscrupulous employers and maybe we should get to the day where all products are made by trade union labour carry a sign proudly made by trade union labour.

The final option is always industrial action but I am a firm believer in the old story that the only reason most employers talk to us in individual unions is that our members will walk out the door if they don't. So now we have a central group of trade union who are going to talk to employers and Government who don't have that stick to wave and I have no doubt in my mind that it is a stick that they need.

We spent many hours this week talking about the attacks on working people through the attacks on the health sector, on pension schemes, on workers' rights to organise, on migrant workers and everywhere we look and everything we do we are under attack. And, in normal circumstances you would tell people in those circumstances, I think the old saying used to be don't wean me and tell me it's raining. Maybe in these days of political correctness, I got one of the lads to translate it into "Don't expel your bodily waste fluids on me and tell me it's precipitation". Look, those type of problems, those type of enemies that attack us all and don't attack us individually had to be fought and we have to defend ourselves as a unit. And all this motion is doing is asking you as delegates to give the centre the opportunity to see how we can best defend those rights as a united movement and I would ask you to support the motion on that basis.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Motion seconded. Can I ask Shay then to move the amendment.

Shay Cody, Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union

Shay Cody, from IMPACT. The purpose of the amendment is to allow Conference to give concrete expression to the comments made by David Begg, the General Secretary in response to the Taoiseach yesterday and adopt this policy that as well as intentions outlined by Steve on behalf of the CWU, that legislative change is an absolute requirement. There is a current Green Paper on European Labour Law and the ETUC made a submission and they made a

very simple point which is that when a worker when conducting a labour contract is in an unequal power relationship with his employer and therefore needs to be protected against having to accept disadvantageous working conditions because refusing them would mean they endanger their job. And they outline that there are two methods or means in Europe for dealing with this. One is individual legal workers rights and the other one is collective bargaining. And in the Republic of Ireland we have the worse of both worlds. In prosecuting and pursuing individual workers rights, if the employer is mean minded enough and wealth enough they can delay, procrastinate and appeal well beyond the ability of any worker to stay the course. The Ryan Air case has shown that if an employer judicially reviews a decision of the Labour Court, the Labour Court currently does not defend its decision and passes it back to the worker or their trade union to pursue the matter right up to the Supreme Court at enormous and prohibitive cost. And think of some poor worker maybe not even represented by a union or represented on a very small case, an employer can actually judicially review the decision of a Rights Commissioner, the EAT or whatever and make it absolutely impossible to secure the outcome. The importance of the Ryan Air Supreme Court case is that the Irish solution to an Irish problem is no longer in existence. It was state that if an employer did not recognise trade unions or engage in collective bargaining and treated staff less favourably than those benefiting from collective bargaining, then a union could take a case and secure a legally binding outcome improving terms and conditions. In effect the Supreme Court has said that you can set up an in-house "uncle Tom" organisation, the employer can insist on the rotation of staff reps, they can exclude professional advice, they don't have to bargain or attend the third party and its all ok from the point of view of Ryan Air and the imminent judges. And what we are saying here is that the 2004 Act needs to be amended and we need to get to the heart of it. An employer who does not recognise unions and engage in collective bargaining can't pretend that they do. Either they do business with unions, and by that we mean recognising bargaining and utilising the LRC and the Labour Court or they don't and if they don't they are at risk at what was the intention when we agreed the framework for this in the national agreement. That position must be restored. If employers are outside of the union orbit and they treat their staff well under the 2000 agreement they could be excluded from the terms of it. But if they treat their staff badly they are at risk and we require that position to be restored. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

The amendment is accepted by the movers and accepted to Conference. No other speakers. Can I put the amended motion to Conference. All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried.

We are due to take Felicity Williams as we agreed before but I am going to invite the NUJ to move the next motion on the Establishment of the Department of Labour and I would ask you to keep your contributions as brief as you can in order that we can facilitate.

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists

President, Conference, in the interest of pan-Celtic relations I will keep this very short. There is probably a tendency on the part of Conference to underestimate the literacy of Conference, I would simply ask you to simply read Motion 22 and say that what this is about is recognising the valuable developmental and promotional role of Enterprise, Trade & Employment but at the same time recognising that that has been at the cost of the worker because the enforcement role and the protection role of workers has simply been ignored by Enterprise, Trade & Employment simply because that has been the political priority. We believe that there is a need for a coherent strategy which recognises the separation between development protection of workers and promotion of industry. They are not conflicting but they are complementary and we believe that a department, a single department, at the Cabinet table is the best way of achieving it. One note of assurance, it is not a ploy to get John O'Donoghue back into Cabinet, he is too much fun where he is. I move.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, is that seconded, yes. There is an amendment from the TEEU. Can I ask the mover to come forward.

Pat Guildfoyle, Technical, Electrical, Engineering Union

Pat Guildfoyle, TEEU, moving amendment to Motion 22. Delegates, at Congress 2005, there was something in the region of ten motions before Conference on exploitation of workers adopted. Whilst acknowledging that major improvements were made in relation to labour standards and compliance provisions in T.16, however, I would draw your attention to the facts. That is that the progress made in T.16 and the ten motions from the 2005 Congress, in the main are words on paper. Fine words but still only words on paper. To build on the advancements made to date and seek the reestablishment of a restructured Department of Labour, headed up by a full Cabinet Minister must be pursued by Congress. This Minister has to have full responsibility for labour affairs along with managing Ireland's labour market and permit to work schemes, the protection of employment standards and workers' rights and entitlements would have to be the primary function of any reformed Department of Labour. Delegates, Enterprise, Trade & Employment look after the interests of the employer. Agriculture and Food look after the Farmers' interests. Indeed, the President's neighbour and fellow county person, Mary Coughlan is probably the best Shop Steward the Farmers have. Both of these departments are headed up by ministers who sit at the Cabinet table, yet, the Department of Labour Affairs is headed up by a minister who is not allowed to sit at the Cabinet table. This clearly demonstrates the priority given by the Government to the workers' rights and standards of employment. Workers are loosing out by the low priority given to the Department of Labour Affairs. Delegates, while the restoration of a reformed Department of

Labour is critical, it is no substitute for organising and tackling head on exploitation of workers where and whenever it is identified. Because delegates, as we all know, that despite the legislation covering the Health & Safety in the workplace, rogue criminal employers continue to flaunt the laws aware of the non-penal penalties even when their actions result in the death of our members. What we are saying to Conference is the only deterrent that will get results is when judges are prepared to jail the perpetrators who engage in such gross exploitation of workers and ignore their obligations under employment legislations, JLCs or RAs etc. This requires legislative change and we need a reformed focussed Department of Labour to support our efforts in this regard. There must be no hiding place for criminal employers on the Island of Ireland and indeed beyond as was the case with GAMA. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, thanks very much Pat. The amendment is seconded, yes, and is acceptable to the NUJ. Can I put the amendment to Conference. Is the amendment acceptable? Ok, it's agreed. We now have notice of a request for remission which Brendan Hayes is going to move.

Brendan Hayes, Services, Industrial, Professional Trade Union

Brendan Hayes on behalf of the Executive Council. The Executive Council supports the analysis that's contained in the resolution and the amendment. Indeed it is quite clear that the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment, which is effectively an amalgamation of the old Department of Industry & Commerce and the Department of Labour is not capable of representing the conflicting interests of employers and workers at the same time. Indeed it is very difficult for a department instructed by the Government to secure minimum regulation of employers and at the same time to secure regulation and protection for workers as two primary conflicting objectives. So there is no question that the Executive agrees with the analysis that has been set out and indeed our own experience in the national discussions has been that on occasions it has been easier to deal with the Department of Finance than it has been to deal with the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment on issues of protection of labour standards. However, the proposition that is put by the NUJ requires a very specific solution to the problem and that is that there would be an exclusive Minister dealing exclusively with labour affairs. Now on the face of it that would appear to be a very commendable solution. There are situations however where it may be sensible for us to seek to have a Minister for Labour who would also deal with pensions, occupational pensions, or to deal with training or to deal with social security or social affairs. And indeed that is the experience we have right across Europe that an exclusive Department of Labour on its own may not be in the best interests of working people. And in the context of the flexicurity debate that is going on in Europe it may indeed be sensible that a Department of Labour would deal with a range of issues beyond simply the issues that are set out in

this resolution. Accordingly, the Executive Council is asking Conference to accept the analysis and the identification of the problem that has been set out by the NUJ but to remit the solution to the Executive Council to give us the flexibility to correct the problem that is properly identified by the NUJ with a solution that will achieve the objective that they set out to achieve. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Will you responding to the request for a remission Seamus please.

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists

President, in light of the request for remission and our motion does seek a reformed Department of Labour and Brendan has made a coherent argument in favour of a reformed department which would have a wider remit, I'm prepared to paraphrase Connolly and say, Labour must wait and Labour must be remitted.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Well the remission is proposed and I am going to put it to Conference – is that agreed? Ok.

Can I now ask Felicity Williams, who is the GS of the Welch TUC, who has been waiting patiently all day to come and address Conference. Thanks very much indeed for your indulgence.

Fraternal Address

Felicity Williams, General Secretary of Wales TUC

Prynhawn DDA. Diolch yn fawr iawn a'ch I gyd am eich gwahoddiad.

Mr President, delegates, thank you very much for the invitation to speak at your Conference. I have no problem at all in making my address whenever it was convenient for you.

I am really very pleased to make a visit to this Congress because it is my first visit to your Congress but it is not my first introduction to your work. In recent years I have been pleased to build on previous links and to seek to work more closely together. Last year we invited Danyanne and Catherine to give us a presentation on the LIFT project and that presentation and that work was very well received. It is a project of which you are and which you should be justly proud. I wish it weren't necessary for it should be possible for more women to attain high office within the trade union movement much

more easily than they do. But the reality is that that is not happening, so initiatives like LIFT are crucial and I hope that you will share your research and your recommendations with the rest of us because the trade union movement really does need to get on with that agenda. And, I know you will be thinking well she would say that wouldn't she, but I truly believe that. I truly believe that it is time that we saw more women in more senior positions.

Looking at your agenda and listening to your debate it is clear that there is much that we have in common and that there are many concerns that we share. We too are wrestling with how to improve public services whilst protecting and supporting those who deliver them. We too are wrestling with how to improve the skills of those in the existing workforce both to give them the opportunity to remain in that workforce, to give them transferable skills should they need to move from one area of employment to another but also to ensure that we no longer have school leavers, and even some graduates, coming out of full time education with basic and essential skills needs. We are wrestling with how to counter inequality and to eradicate poverty particularly for the youngest and oldest in our society. And of course we are wrestling with how to grow and sustain trade union membership and to how to use the opportunity for a strong economy to build a fairer, more equal and more decent society. And we work to do all of those things in partnership with our Welsh Assembly Government, our devolved Government. The elections for the third term of that Government were held on 3 May this year and for us in the trade union movement the results were particularly disappointing. The election resulted in no party gaining overall control so nine weeks on we have a minority Labour Government which we all recognise is not stable and could be brought down at any moment by the so called rainbow coalition of the Tories, the Liberal Democrats and the Nationalist Party in Wales, Plaid Cymru. It means that business that should be getting done isn't being done and I am sure that many of you will recognise that. Over this coming weekend the Labour Party in Wales and Plaid Cymru have each recalled their delegate conferences to consider a document to work together in coalition so it may be that next week in Wales we will have a stable Government, a Labour and Plaid Cymru coalition. And I have to tell you few would have predicted that before the election. But whatever the outcome we in the union movement will want and indeed we must, continue to work with that Government for all the devolved areas not least health, education, transport and economic development are key areas where the trade union voice must be heard and where it will be heard. In Ireland you have relatively high employment as do we. Indeed unemployment has fallen significantly in Wales in the last ten years and that should be a real opportunity for the trade union movement. Again like yours our trade union membership in Wales has held up pretty well and according to recent labour market stats our membership has grown more than that of any other nation of the UK in the last ten years. Clearly that is good news but it simply isn't good enough so we too are focussing our efforts on

organising. We have established an organising forum open to all affiliates and held our first organising conference to debate the issues and to share best practice. The slogan of the Wales TUC is that we are the voice of Wales at work. But we are only, and can only, be that voice through the strength of union membership. Only with a strong and growing membership in all sectors public and private will we retain the authority and the credibility to back up that claim. Each of us in that room is a trade union activists whatever our role, an lay activist or a full time officer, because we know and we understand that we are stronger together. That is as true at the workplace level as it is for our trade union Congresses. We must and we should work together for we can learn from each other and we can help each other.

The Irish Ferries dispute has been mentioned a few times at this Conference and the Wales TUC was pleased to join with you and assist you in that fight in any way that we could. Now none of us want to see more disputes of that nature but I do want to see more of that collaboration between us. I can assure you that my organisation will work with you whenever and wherever possible.

I have enjoyed my visit very much and I truly believe that if we all work together we can show the world that trade unions are as alive and as relevant in the UK and Ireland today as they have ever been.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much Felicity and we look forward to working with you maybe not always as late in the evening but that's for another day.

Delegates I am now going to draw proceedings for this long day to a close but I have a few short announcements to make. First, the collection that was taken up for the Centre in Leitrim, in Manorhamilton, generated €1,087. Secondly, I have been asked to announce that the Unite ballot for the Jim Larkin print will take place at the function after Conference. And thirdly, just to remind you of the event that is taking place I think just across the hall here to mark the centenary celebrations of the 1907 Dockers and Carters Strike in Belfast, there is a bit of entertainment, a play and a short talk by John Gray and as many of you as you can are invited to attend that.

Tomorrow morning we will resume at 9.30pm, sharp. We will start with Motion 70 from the Belfast and District Trades Council. We will try and get through a lot of motions that we have missed and my final thought to leave with you tonight when you are preparing for your motions tomorrow is that your speech does not have to be eternal for your words to become immortal and you might bare that in mind.

Conference adjourned until Friday, 6 July, 2008 at 9.30am

Friday 7 July Morning Session

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

We are going to proceed with business. Happy birthday to Betty. Ok, I suggest we get proceedings underway because we have some ground to make up and when we get through the schedule of motions, I will set out then an approach for dealing with the outstanding motions for your approval. So can I invite the speaker from Belfast and District Trades Council to come forward and move Motion 70.

Frank Cammock, Belfast and District Trades Council

Good morning President and Conference. Comrades, some time in life we have to stand up and say enough is enough. And we have had enough of the persecution of the Palestinian people. As with South Africa and apartheid before it, Israel will only abide by international law when forced to do so. The Zionist regime is the most powerful military apparatus in the Middle East and it is never shy about using it. Yet its propaganda machine backed up by imperialists, news media that remains largely successful in portraying Israel as the victim state. Israel shamelessly exploits the memory of the six million European Jews put to death by an industrialised Nazi machine even though only a tiny minority were supportive of Zionism. It also smears of anti-Semitism, the Arab people who resist the colonisation of their lands and other people who support the Arab rights to defend themselves. Such is the power of this one-sided propaganda tidal wave that opinion poles indicate that many people believe that the occupied territories are Israeli land occupied by Palestinians. There is also a more nuance version of this attempt to flummox public opinion the notion of disputed territories. This means that on top of the 70 per cent historical Palestine that Israel already holds, the other 22 per cent is up for grabs. And grabbing is what precisely what they are doing. It is creating new facts on the ground by expanding its West Bank settlements and by dividing its apartheid wall through Palestine to make life unsustainable. The affect is to render the future establishment of a Palestinian state worthy of the name impossible. Scarcely a week passes without Palestinian homes being bulldozed, Palestine olive groves and orchards being rooted up and Palestinian people being ethnically cleansed in the land of their birth. The oppressed people of Palestine as the black people of South Africa did nearly a half a century ago are calling on all decent people everywhere to assist their struggle for national rights by isolating the power, economically, military and crucially when the apartheid boycott was muted opponents suggested it would be ineffective or contradictory. They were wrong.

Comrades, as socialists and trade unionists and ant-racists and supporters of international justice we must unite to help the Palestinian people by isolating their oppressor. Comrades, Conference support the motion and support the campaign to free the Palestinian people from their oppressor. Conference support the Motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Have we a seconder. Are you seconding, ok.

Michael Robinson, Northern Ireland Public Service Association

President, Conference, Michael Robinson to second the motion. It would be difficult Conference to explain to the Palestinian people the concept of the hierarchal value of human life. We are told that all human life is sacred but it seems that the Palestinian people that theirs is less so. Otherwise the history of Palestine and relations with the Zionists would be very different. The role of the international community and the opinion of the international community would be different. It also difficult to explain to the Palestinian people that there is a concept of international law and that that has any meaning or any effect or input in the world because the international law is slighted when it comes to Israel. Israel is above international law, it is in breach of dozens, literally dozens of UN Resolutions. Resolutions that condemn Israel from maintaining an apartheid regime, condemn Israel for illegal occupation of Palestinian territory that condemns Israel for all sorts of breaches in the Geneva Convention in holding of prisoners and in other matters. And it is not that we don't know that this is what Israel is. Its not that we don't know that Zionism is. As early as 1921 men like Dr Edar who was then the Chairman of the Zionist Commission stated to a British Commission of Enquiry on Palestine, I quote, "There can only be one national home in Palestine and that a Jewish one and no equality on the partnership between Jews and Arabs but a Jewish predominance as soon as the numbers of that race are sufficiently increased". That in some ways is the Zionist project. The Zionists project, not the Jewish project, but the Zionist project is to have Palestine cleansed of all Arabs until Jewish predominance is created. That is what my colleague Frank Cammock is talking about when he talked about Israelis making facts on the ground. The facts on the ground are Israeli settlements, they are the apartheid wall, it is the oppression of the Palestinian people, the expulsion of the Palestinian people, most particularly in 1948 in what the Palestinians called the Nakba – a catastrophe where Palestinians were driven from their homes after a series of staged atrocities against them. They have never got back to their homes. They are a people – Golda Meir once said there is no such thing as the Palestinian people. Were there is a thing called the Palestinian people but up to four million of them live outside their own country. They live as refugees. At the same time the international community oppose the notion of a right of return to the Jewish people for people who have never been born, never lived, never been in Palestine. The Palestinian people expelled from

their homes apparently have no right of return. That is what is difficult to explain to these people that the United Nations is an honest broker in international politics. It isn't. The United Nations is a rotten borough and it is a rotten borough because its creation within which the Security Council means that the five permanent members of it are above international law. And that means that America, a key participant in it, use their veto over and over again. The union movement can do something about this. We can do what we did in South Africa, we can boycott, we can divest, and we can make sure that none of this is done in our name. We can challenge the Euromed agreement, we can challenge European Union. Support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Again can I say that I know you have put a lot of work and these are very important motions but I would ask you that if you can at all to stick within the times. Are there any other speakers on 70? If not can I put Motion 70 to the floor. All those in favour please show, anyone against, any abstentions. Ok, that's carried. Ok I have an abstention, yes. Can I ask Derry Trades Council to come forward to move Motion 71. I am just asking Eamon to please stay within the three minutes if you can.

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council

Ok. Sorry a bit out of breath, just arrived, sorry. Motion 71 Derry Trades Council. In moving this motion I will just make one point to keep within the time. Of all the issues in the Middle East that have often been described as multi-faceted and indeed it is and very complicated and indeed of all the issues in the world arguably, it is the oppression of the Palestinian people which provides the context for the sense of grievance which is widespread across the Arab and Muslim worlds and even further afield. A sense a grievance which provides a context in which people for other reasons, ideological reasons and reasons of religious ideology, wish to adopt terrorist tactics. It is that sense of grievance which gives a context of which they find or claim to be able to find justification for the despicable campaigns which the wage. In asking Conference to pass this resolution as the previous resolution one of the things we are seeking to do is to say to the wider world, to say to the Arab world, to say to the Muslim world, that they are not alone. That the strategy for the people I refer to is neither necessary nor constructive, indeed it is destructive and futile, is to say to them is lay on Trotsky if I can dare the man in this context, is that Trotsky says in his great pamphlet against individual terrorism is the point is not simply to condemn, the point is to say there is another way, there is another road. In passing this resolution we would be laying out that other way, that other road and playing our part in constructing it. I am reminded that a long time ago in 1948, Erskin Childers, son of Erskin Childers who died during the Irish Civil War, working as a journalist in the Middle East ended a wonderful article by saying about the Palestinian people, if you go among them in the hills of Judea today, they will

point through the barbed wire and say to you; there that house over there beside those trees that is my home. Delegates, all these decades later it is shaming beyond words that the Palestinian people are as far from home as ever. In passing this resolution we would in our own small way be giving witness to our solidarity with them, declaring our sense of shame that the Palestinian people are still in the position that they were in 1948 and in saying to them that we are with them in their long, indomitable effort to reach their homes again. Delegates please pass the resolution.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

To second, yes.

Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON

President, delegates, Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON to support both motions. My own union has for a very long time been at the forefront of solidarity and support for the people of Palestine. We have many projects currently running in the West Bank and Gaza within the PGFTU. As a result we receive daily reports of what is happening there. The plight of the Palestinian people should be in front of Europe. Instead Europe is exercising sanctions against Palestine instead of the aggressor Israel. The pressure has to be stepped up. At my union's annual conference two weeks ago, we carried a motion calling for a boycott of Israel. The facts of that motion has been reported around the world. However, for the first time our union came under enormous pressure from Zionists. The same thing will happen when we pass these motions today. We should not worry. It means we are having an effect. Lets start by putting pressure on Irish Cement who are building the wall and Irish Rail who have just signed a contract. It worked in South Africa. From small beginnings we can make it work for the people of Palestine. I support.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much. Further speakers, yes.

Paul McCrea, Public Services Executive Union

Paul McCrea, PSEU Solidarity and ICTU Solidarity Committee. Well we know that Palestine is a very particular case that requires your attention. Unfortunately, the private workers in many countries around the world requires international solidarity. And one of the ways to ensure that globalisation is made to deliver for working people everywhere is a strong international union movement and our committees welcomes the intentions of ICTU to re-affiliate to our brothers and sisters International Trade Union Confederation. One of the most practical ways Irish trade unions can engage with these issues is to get involved in Congress Global Solidarity which provides guidance and information

to unions who wish to be active. I would like to draw your attention to a new postcard campaign urging retailers to play a constructive role in ensuring the respect for workers' rights along their supply chain in the fashion industry. Please ensure, as activists, that you take as many of these cards with you as possible and get them completed by your members and returned to Congress. This will strengthen their hand in their discussions with Irish retailers on this important issue. I would also urge you to visit the No Sweat Website and buy t-shirts made in Palestine which is a very small but practicable way of supporting the issue. Thanks very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, there is no other speakers. Can I put the motion to the floor. All those in favour please show, anyone against, abstentions? Ok, that motion is carried. 72 in the name of the CWU.

Ian McArdle, Communication Workers Union

President, delegates, Ian McArdle, Communication Workers Union to speak on Motion 72. Delegates, I had a speech prepared to deliver here today outlining the Communication Workers Union's concerns regarding the apparent loss or abandonment of the social dimension of the European Union project and the fact that the Lisbon Strategy which promises all more and better jobs appears to have been lost in the mix somehow. But I am going to with your indulgence abandon that speech on foot of a meeting I had on Tuesday in the European Commission with Commissioner Charlie McCreevy of all people. I was there as the representative of my General Secretary who was obviously here in Bundoran at Conference and I was there as part of a Union Network International delegation and our objective was to set out our very clear, legitimate and real concerns about the Commission's intent on liberalising the postal services throughout the European Union. And I perhaps somewhat naively was looking forward to this meeting for I felt that our arguments carried some amount of weight and the Commissioner surely would be convinced by them. The Commissioner began by saying that liberalisation is good for consumers. He went on to say that it is good for the companies involved and most importantly it is good for postal workers. We argues and said that it is not good for consumers. Postal service prices have not gone down and in many cases services have been diminished. The only group that has benefited in terms of price decreases as a result of liberalisation has of course been big business operators. We argued that it is not good for companies because the larger operators are hoofing up market share and cherry picking profitable postal routes. And finally we said that it is clearly not good for workers. 100,000 jobs have been lost since the liberalisation process began and those jobs that were created are poorly paid, temporary and insecure employment. I felt how could he possibly resist the weight of these arguments, imminently logically as they were, but we were thanked for our time and we were sent on our way. And it became very, very clear to me that what we had said had

not changed their minds one iota. And I was struck by a phrase as I stood in the Commission building in Brussels in the heart of Europe and it was a phrase I heard at the BDC in Belfast two years ago when David Begg, addressing our Taoiseach, reminded him that the heart beats on the left and I thought to myself here I am in the heart of Europe and the social heart of Europe has clearly stopped because the Commission has no apparent intent on taking on board the concerns that we clearly put to them in terms of the liberalisation agenda that Europe appears intent in pursuing.

Delegates, the single market has a single purpose and it increasingly appears to be that it is there to serve the needs of big business. It does not serve to protect the workers I'm afraid. It does not appear to serve the needs of its citizens and it does not serve the need to support and provide good public services. I commend the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much Ian. Is there a seconder? Formally seconded. No other speakers. Can I put the motion to the floor. All those in favour of Motion 72 please show, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried unanimously.

Ok, CPSU to move Motion 73 please.

Blair Horan, Civil & Public Services Union

Thanks President. Morning delegates, Blair Horan, CPSU. In March this year the European Union celebrated its 50th birthday, founded on the ideas of the great visionary Jean Monnet to construct a new Europe to prevent war. Over two hundred years ago the German philosopher Emanuel Kant set out in perpetual peace that the means to prevent war was to have democratic Governments. Democratic Governments make war but democratic countries do not go to war with one another. Over the past fifty years the European Union has been greatly influential in bringing democracy to each of the four corners of the continent and that work continues in the Balkans. We must remind ourselves, delegates that Europe is still a peace project that must be nurtured if we are to stay in it. But peace alone is not the limit of our aspirations. We also demand prosperity for all our citizens and that requires social values to be at the heart of Europe. Following the Dutch and French referenda there was a real concern that social Europe was disappearing in the midst of a neo-liberal agenda. But the compromise in the Services Directive has been a real victory for the trade union movement and the recent decisions by the Advocacy General in the Laval and Viking case does give grounds for hoping that the values of Europe are beginning to reassert themselves. The Charter of Fundamental Rights is a progressive document setting out fundamental rights for citizens including civil, political and social and economic rights. It combines the human rights dimension of the Convention on Europe with the social and economic principles build up in

the European Union over the years. It is an important symbolic document that guarantees fundamental rights for citizens across Europe. While we have no certainty that the rights will be fully applicable in Irish law, the fact that the Charter will have full legal affect and the trends in the European Court decision does give grounds for optimism. As the Charter shapes the Norman culture within the EU, it is difficult to see how it can be confined only to EU law. Indeed the deplorable decision by the UK Government to seek an opt out tends to point in that direction. Last week we had real concerns that the Irish Government was seeking a similar opt out. While I tend to share the view in the Irish Times editorial of last Friday that the words 'join in' have a certain meaning, we now have the assurances from the Taoiseach that they will not be seeking an opt out. It is also important to note that the new Treaty downplays competition policy and also gives further rise in relation to public services and services of general interest.

Delegates, there are arguments that Europe is seeking to becoming a military power with the advent of battle groups and a Minister for Foreign Affairs. I do not believe this to be the case. Europe will never be a match or rival to the United States nor should it be. But Europe has exercised soft power through aid, access to markets and moral persuasion and it must build its capacity to exercise this soft power to an even greater extent. But some military capability is necessary. Europe was unable to prevent the genocide in Srebrenica only ten years ago. Who can safely suggest that it should continue to lack what's necessary for the most important humanitarian intervention which is to prevent genocide. Today Europe has two of the world's most pressing problems on its doorstep. Poverty in Africa and the Palestinian question. Hopefully, sooner rather than later Europe through aid and access to markets along with good governance can help pull Africa out of poverty. The Arab-Israeli conflict is just as pressing but will be much more difficult. The decision to invade Iraq which divided Europe was a catastrophe. Along with the Palestinian question the lack of democracy in Arab countries it has led to the radicalisation of a new generation of Muslim youth, the consequences of which we will fear for sometime to come. The coordination of foreign policy under the new reform treaty will at the very least make such decisions more difficult in the future. Democracy and development are needed but democracy cannot come through the barrel of a gun and does anybody seriously think the United States will be the progressive global force for development, it will not. Only a strong Europe can do both of those. Delegates support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much Blair. Is this to second. Ok.

Chris Cully, Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union

Chris Cully, IMPACT seconding Motion 73 on the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Delegates, this Conference has done a lot of important business this week and extracting a firm commitment from the Taoiseach over the Charter of Fundamental Rights stands out as a fundamental or substantial achievement. The job for this movement now is to stay vigilant and to ensure that politicians and public officials follow through on that commitment. I have every confidence that this Executive Committee will watch it very closely. They have our full support in this. Support Motion 73.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

I am glad your voice held up there towards the end.

Kazik Anhalt, Services, Industrial, Professional Trades Union

Kazik Anhalt, SIPTU. Dear President, delegates, I would like to come back to reply to the previous motion in relation to European Social model but in context the European Treaty. The European Social model, I have learned, was an integral part of the definition of the European Union, to be precise its main foundation. The Union is an organisation of member states established to conduct synchronized policies starting from issues tailored like to improve competitiveness to disconcerting functioning local social model and social cohesion. The meaning of European social model has been let down by Lisbon Strategy. Process to develop more and better jobs for all. Perhaps Ireland creates more jobs. Figures presented by independent research institutions speak volumes but are they really better? According to the last survey commissioned by ICTU some numbers of immigrants earn over 30 per cent less than an Irish colleague and again some 50 per cent of Poles live on the Island intend to stay for good. But it is a major problem for them. I tell you. The social exclusion. Is there any evidence at all which push me to formulate such a brave opinion? Yes there is. Blatantly it starts with so called transgression process. The term of existence I fully acknowledge. I was reading Labour Relations Commission report titled 'Migrant Workers Access to Statutory Dispute Resolution Agencies'. It is the truth that some greedy, cheeky employers so called 'cute whores' model economy are simply encouraged to breach the law knowing that it is a weak penalty system, its presence, its European scale. Once they do so there is no end. Avalanche becomes real. Revenue has no record of PRSI contribution rates required for those with habitual residency status to be qualified for benefits from social welfare. These Slovaks, Checks, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, generally Eastern Europeans, moreover citizens of United Europe become outcasts, socially excluded, second class citizens turned away by institutions. Depressed unhappy people, this is a matter of fact. What is the antidote against it? Education, upskilling, language courses, building awareness and self confidence, yes, it may rectify the position but may not. But again how

would they learn English if forced to work excessive hours and coming back to their homes exhausted and tired just dreaming to have enough. It is also deemed that there is only one chance for them to escape a vicious circle they find themselves in to have a right like all others to be protected by unions. To have sick schemes, pensions, facilities etc to bargain collectively. Then the problems are gone, sad but unrepeatable. With European Charter a fundamental right which in Article 28 states and guarantees a right to bargain. This liberation obstructed by the Irish Government, this right evaporates especially in context of the recent Supreme Court decision. Therefore, we must pose few taxing questions to Irish Government. Do recognise a right to bargain collectively and do not keep the gate open to redefine right at national level the name and sovereignty of the state and its sovereignty, the sovereignty of working people of Ireland remember Montesc and Duntont, all they want is business. I believe that the Charter of Fundamental Rights must be incorporated into EU Constitution. I strongly support motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you. I don't know about the definition of 'cute whorism' but if you come up in the middle of Motion 73 and speak on Motion 72 you are doing very well. Well done. Are you speaking on 73?

????? TEEU (name incomprehensible on tape)

????? TEEU. TEEU will be supporting this motion so I am going to use my few minutes up here in order to alert you to a few areas which need vigilance should this be passed at referendum. This little booklet is being distributed outside and this includes the text of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. However, you have to look behind this in order to find qualifying articles within the proposed treaty itself. If the articles in this become justifiable, in other words if there is an argument between for example the trade unions here, Government here, that argument between the EU and the Government, it will go to the European Court of Justice and there is no better place to look for their attitude than the case law of that Court. I will just give you two quotes; the first one says 'the fundamental rights recognised by the Court are not absolute but must be considered in relation to their social function. Consequently restrictions may be imposed on the exercise of those rights, in particular in the context of a common organisation of the market'. And that has been backed up by a letter where the Court stated it is well established in the case law of the Court that a restriction may be imposed on the exercise of fundamental rights, in particular in the context of a common organisation of the market. And the overriding consideration on the part of the Court is the market and that is not surprising because if you look elsewhere in the proposed constitution Article 317 stipulates that the members states in the union, and this is a quote from the constitution itself 'shall act in accordance with the principal of an open market economy with free competition'. And that's unequivocally neo-liberal and as the law, as they do at the moment, of the EU

take precedence over Irish law, you can expect that the Court will continue to apply the same view with regard to the dormancy of the market.

I wanted to deal with one or two examples of conflicts that might arise but of course time is rather limited.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Could I ask you to maybe sum up because your time is up at this stage.

????? TEEU (name incomprehensible on tape)

Ok, I will sum up to the extent that I was surprised at the proposer of the motion addressed the complete constitution, proposed constitution rather than confining the proposal to the item under consideration which is the Charter of Fundamental Rights. I was very surprised at that. However, I will sum up by saying that the price of freedom is constant vigilance. And the trade union movement and Congress and constituent unions will need to be very vigilant if this particular Charter of Fundamental Rights becomes law. Thank you very much delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you. If there are no other speakers in 73 can I put 73 to Conference? All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions. That's carried. 74, formally moved, ok, seconded, formally seconded. There are no speakers. Are you going to...yes, ok.

Mick Halpenny, Services, Industrial, Professional Trades Union

Delegates, President, I hadn't planned to speak on this but the motion is actually proposed by our colleagues in the RMT who are also comrades of ours on the European Transport Workers Federation along with UNITE and a number of other unions and I don't think that this Conference should pass without at least an airing of the issue here which I will try and do fairly briefly. The point really is this – is that there is a proposal from the Commission initially in the form of a Green Paper. It is probably transposed at this stage to a White Paper which is labeled the paper on the reform of European labour law. I think Congress has it right in their analysis because they describe it as a Trojan Horse. There is one key word in there and it is called 'flexicurity' which, quite frankly, nobody can figure out. It has a particular meaning in the Nordic Countries where you have a very strong social platform, where you have a very strong trade union involvement and a very strong trade union protection. I am not so sure what meaning that has in the weaker areas of the European Community and I would include ourselves in that. I think that this is one issue on which we need to campaign. Because the affects of this paper if it goes through may well mean that protections for workers will be weakened throughout Europe. We are very

clear on the position on the reform of labour law. We believe it should be reformed and it should be reformed to improve the right to collective bargaining. To improve worker protection, to ensure in fact that directives such as those dealing with temporary workers should be enforceable in all of the states of the union and not just in some. The only way that we are going to deal with this is not to allow ourselves to be bamboozled by some of the soft sell which will be coming on stream later on this year, but by working with the European Trade Union movement, by working also politically to ensure that there is an awareness about the dangers of this particular project which is being primarily put forward by the employers and why do I say that?

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Michael, the time is up.

Mick Halpenny, Services, Industrial, Professional Trades Union

I will just leave you with this. It is an open secret that the original Green Paper was turned back by the employers federation in Europe and the Commission were told go back and write the right one. Now that's enough of a signal for us to oppose this, to work with our colleagues in Europe and to ensure that it does not become fact. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Any other speakers on 74? If not can I get a seconder for 74, yes, can I put 74, all those in favour, all those against, just hand on a second Michael, I am going to take the EEC Report just before you come up. Was there any abstentions on that? That's carried. Before taking the vote on the EC Report the General Secretary wants to make a contribution.

David Begg, General Secretary

Thank President. I just really want to wish to make a few very quick points. First of all I want to take the opportunity of thanking Blair Horan for the work that he has done on behalf of Congress at the Forum on Europe. Blair has sort of become our permanent representative more or less at that Forum and has done a really excellent job for us. A great deal of the credit in rumbling this business about the Charter of Fundamental Rights must go to Blair because he did a forensic search of the Presidency's conclusions when they were published after the IGC and he found in footnote four on page 25 of the conclusions an extremely vague and ambiguous statement about two delegations having reserved their positions on the UK opt out of the Charter and that of course was where this position of the Irish Government was hidden so I just feel necessary to thank Blair publically for the amount of work he has done on the European connection.

The second point I want to make is that I suppose it maybe reinforces the need for us to look at our organisational structure Congress on this debate this morning because it is one of the most important debates of the week and its rather I suppose a pity given the work that has been done by the delegates behind the motions that it is a very poorly attended debate and time is so short on it. In a note of some self-criticism may I say that on mature reflection there is one major omission from this international part of the report which we are all responsible for and that is that there is no motion down on Darfur. We could have put one down from the Executive Council as well as everyone else but really it is a serious omission when you think that 400,000 people have died there and there is no obvious solution to it really. It really is a terrible scar on the integrity of the world that that is happening and it is necessary for the record of this Conference, I think, that that remark should be read in to it at least. Thank you colleagues.

The final observation I want to make is that in relation to the debate on the Middle East, I think these are really tragic times in that respect. I agreed substantially with the analysis that Eamon McCann laid out there. I possibly, Eamon, reserve my position slightly on the particular insights of Mr Trotsky in relation to these matters but generally speaking I think what you said was absolutely spot on. There is a need, I think you are right, to look at things from the perspective of a paradigm shift there because I mean lets face it, we are not looking at a two state solution anymore by virtue of what has happened in recent times, it is a three state position which is emerging there which I think in its own way is quiet tragic. And I believe that Eamon made the point that the resolution of the Middle East situation and the position of the Palestinian people was critical to the resolution of many of the problems in the world. And, I think probably what needs to change most of all is how the West and the United States, particularly, looks at the situation of Iran because the United States has followed a two, a containment strategy basically for that region between Iraq and Iran in the past by virtue of the policy decisions and the actions on Iraq that has now collapsed and the reality, the real politic of the situation is that Iran has emerged as a major power rivaling Israel in the Middle East and Israel of course is very much fearful that by acquiring nuclear weapons its security will be seriously be put in jeopardy. There is no reason for enmity between the United States and Iran other than recent history. There is no strategic reason for it and I think that it is necessary to make some real attempts to redefine that relationship and in redefining that relationship it redefines the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah and between Iran and Hamas and out of that may possibly come the long term solution but we have to break, I think, the binds that are there at the moment and Congress has taken a more active role in this. People like Brendan Mackin particularly has done an awful lot of work on this and hopefully we will try to maintain contacts with progressive forces but within the trade union movement of Palestine and within Israel itself to try to do what we can to effect things. I think often we think we have no influence on these matters but actually as the labour

movement in Ireland what is said and done here today may very well end up being commented upon in newspapers elsewhere in the world. We should be aware of that, that we have an influence, that we have a moral responsibility in respect of all these matters to try to bring it to bare. Thank you President.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Can I ask for your agreement to the adoption of the Section 7 of the EC Report on International. Is that agreed? Agreed. Ok, I am going to ask Michael on behalf of Standing Orders to give us some guidance as to how we deal with the outstanding business.

Michael Sharp, Chairman of Standing Orders Committee

Thanks President. Michael Sharp, Chair of Standing Orders. Delegates, we are still left with 19 motions that were tabled on the programme of business but have not been taken. 19 motions in 4 sections. The hope of Standing Orders is that we can have all those motions dealt with in some way or another but we are conscious that the President gave certain commitments as well in relation to particular motions so what we are proposing is that we give discretion to the President as to the order in which he will take those various motions and also in relation to the number of speakers that he will call in relation to them rather than laying down specific constraints. So I would ask that you give the President the power to be able to do that and to be able to deal with motions and to honour commitments that he gave. We also have received a number of Emergency Motions. Now with regret it doesn't appear likely that we are going to be able to table many of those. There is one particular one from the Communication Workers Union, UK, because it deals with an ongoing existing dispute we would feel that if at all possible that one will be taken. As I say, if at all possible. In relation to the others it doesn't seem likely that we will get to them, but we are proposing basically that the President has discretion to go from here in and try to fit in, genuinely, as much as we can before he feels that he must move to close the Conference.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok. After four years you finally get a bit of power and it is only going to last an hour. Ok, what I am proposing to do is to take Motions 52, 53, 54, that is the ESB motion, the one on nuclear power and one on Shell to Sea. Then I am going to go back to deal with motions on Education 60, 61, 62, 63 and 64. I think Eddie Mathews is the only speaker from the committees that didn't get a chance so I am going to ask you at that stage to come in after Motion 64 for a brief contribution. I then think we should take the Emergency Motion after that and then we will deal with the remaining motions. We will see where we are at that stage I think. So can I ask the mover of Motion 52 to come forward please and I think what we are suggesting is that we will have a proposer, a seconder, and

unless there is opposition that there wouldn't be anymore speakers if that is acceptable, OK. OK 52 please on the ESB. Are you going to move 53, there you go.

Michael O'Reilly, UNITE ATGWU

O'Reilly on behalf of the Transport Section of UNITE. Chairman, I just want to ask the Conference to keep two numbers in mind; 37 and 67. This is in relation to the Government's policy on electricity. We had a debate here about inflation. The impact of ESB prices on inflation is quite considerable and I believe there are alternatives to it. I also believe that in terms of winning support for these policies we can find support even with the employers because ESB prices are having a very negative impact on competitiveness and that is very important for employment. The reality of the situation is this – that the cost of producing electricity has moved. If it had been left alone the cost would have increased by 37 per cent but because of Government policies they have gone up by 67 per cent. We done an analysis of this and it is very simple because you see the Government want to introduce competition in the electricity market and it won't happen and it may be me saying this is like a cat barking but let me say this. If the market is left to deal with this situation the costs will actually go down. What they are doing is they are saying that we have to have some competition so we have to rise the prices of electricity to make it profitable for the private sector to come and compete with the ESB and I think that is a scandal, that we should seek alliances with all kinds of people to combat because it don't make sense and let me tell you that there are even people in IBEC and the Small Business Association who believe that it doesn't make sense. And this all about the alter of doing something and ultimately I believe opening up the ESB to some form of privatisation by stealth, that is what this is all about and we have to oppose it root and branch. And this is quite popular. I believe we can bring a popular mood with us on this whole situation.

Now the Government has gone at great lengths to divert attention from what they are doing. They proposed a break up of the ESB and they are saying that the assets should be transferred to another body. This is nothing to do with prices. Even the Regulator stated that the transfer of these assets would have no impact. That is on the official record. It has nothing to do with competitiveness. Already private companies have unfettered access to the grid. It is about the long term downgrading of the ESB to facilitate companies that want to compete rather than improve the performance. Let me say this. Another generation of politicians in this country had a different vision of the ESB. If we are going to face up to what has to be done in relation to developing wind power and all the other alternatives that we have to do, what better vision or company to have to do that in this century than the ESB as they done it in the last century when they brought in rural electrification and everything else. What the ESB needs is a vision, a direction and an ambition to tackle these ideas on behalf of all the Irish people and we should oppose anything that breaks up the ESB and we should

expose these policies for the sham and the lies that they are. We can do it if we have the will to do it. It is a political question. We have to mobilise all our member on it and we have to mobilise allies everywhere to defeat this policy. I move the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks. Seconder.

Davy Naughton, Technical, Engineering, Electrical Union

Davy Naughton, TEEU seconding the motion. We see this motion as a complimentary motion to an earlier motion passed, 51, in relation to the White Paper and the opposition to the break up of the ESB. In going through the motion it covers just a number of areas. There is an item through the looking glass – that has already been adopted by the ESB Group of Unions. It is not necessary a policy but the content of it in general was reflective of the views of the unions and it was adopted in the same way as Congress has been asked to adopt it. I don't think Congress is being asked to make it a particular policy or to modify anything else. Most of the rest of the motion deplore what is being done. We have already done that in earlier motion. We request Congress to do what it can to maintain the VIU and we note that David Begg has already requested specifically the Minister not to proceed with the break up. All we can do there is ask Dave to remind him on the next occasion that he gets.

On the last section of it where it asks, in case there is any confusion, Congress assures the ESB unions that they will receive the full support of ICTU in relation to the unions' comments to do whatever is necessary. From the trade unions in the ESB, and there is now a group in the ESB mainly due to the intervention of Congress and I take the opportunity to thank Tom Crean for forming the group. I was either fortunate or unfortunate enough to be elected as the Group Secretary. There has been a number of meetings with the unions and the general view of the unions is if we have a position when push comes to shove you are either prepared to do something to maintain that position or you are not. As much as the unions said was they would do what was necessary. Now, ESB as Dave would be aware, the last time we had a major difficulty with the company we ended up using internal procedures, the NIB, the Labour Court and then a special facilitator that was appointed, so Congress can be assured whatever is necessary will be done procedurally and will be correct and we wouldn't at any stage embarrass Congress by putting them in a position looking for them to endorse something that wasn't procedurally correct. So, it is not a blank cheque. That would be the view of all of the users. Thank you very much. I wish you will support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, there is no indication of a speaker opposing so I am going to put 52 to Conference. All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. 53 in the name of the Waterford Trades Council on Nuclear Power.

Tom Hogan, Waterford Trades Council

Ladies, Gentlemen, President, Tom Hogan of behalf of Waterford Trades Council. Waterford Council of Trade Unions calls on Conference to reject nuclear power as neither sustainable or acceptable on the grounds of environmental risk, health and safety and costs. The case against nuclear energy is valid even in a period of peak oil and massive potentially climate change. Uranium is a finer resource like fossil fuel. If we include lower grade uranium which requires much more energy output in mining and processing and enriched uranium from decommissioned weapons at current use levels they would last no more than a few decades. Nuclear reactors are expensive to build and there is considerable dispute as to how much. In fact a recent review by the Cabinet Office in the UK shows that nuclear power is more expensive than conventional or renewable resources and it needs massive public money as subsidies to keep it competitive. Over the lifetime of a nuclear power plant from mining processing, construction and storage, all which contains massive movement of transport, other words carbon emitting transport. Taken all together a nuclear power plant is no greener or cleaner than a gas fire plant. Studies on completion costs for nuclear power plants in both USA and India show a 200 per cent and 300 per cent overruns respectively. Finland, currently building a nuclear reactor, a decision taken in 2001 in the Parliament is currently 18 months behind schedule and estimated to cost 2.5 billion is now running 700 million over budget and is not expected to come in under 400 million. Nuclear reactors, sorry, it would take about ten years for a nuclear plant to come on stream in this country even if construction was to start this morning. It would cost in and around \$2 billion but it would only contribute 7-10 per cent of our energy needs. There is no safe clear method of disposing of waste that will remain radioactive for thousands of years. We don't have this problem. Why would an Island like Ireland want to take on this massive burden and hand it on to future generations. Nuclear power plants require constant security as they are an obvious threat to terrorism and are the source of raw materials for nuclear weapons and it is in fact a spin-off from the nuclear weapon industry. This motion further calls for the development of alternative energies, wind, wave, tides, solar biomass and a national vision to be self-sufficient in these clean, sustainable technologies, along with the proper resources of research and design investment, industry wide planning and coordination and wide scale conservation measures. And together with considerable resources and expertise of the public enterprise, in particular the ESB, we can turn Ireland into a worldwide leader in renewable technologies. Nuclear power is a costly, dirty, dangerous alternative that will

drain resources away from the real green, sustainable alternatives. Support this motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you very much. Can I have a seconder. Formally seconded. We have notice of a remission, General Secretary.

David Begg, General Secretary of Congress

Yes, President, thank you. We are asking Waterford Council of Trade Unions to consider remitting this motion for some further consideration and it is not actually that we have any substantive disagreement with any of the points which Tom made but just to explain the reasons for that. First of all last year the Executive Council established a committee to look at energy policy which was headed up by Jerry Shanahan and spent some months at this and came to a conclusion, all of which I won't go into now but it was essentially agnostic on the question of nuclear power and instead called for the promotion for a wide ranging debate on future energy policy including the question of nuclear. The difficulty we had at that time was with the Irish Government policy because in the publication initially of its Green Paper and subsequently of its White Paper it foreclosed the option of nuclear. It said it wouldn't touch it, wouldn't consider it in any circumstances whatsoever and we felt that that was intellectually dishonest of the Government because nuclear power is extremely unpopular. I think very few people in the population would be very interested in it or want to have it, but we felt that the Government had a responsibility to say what are the options, that is the important thing, and the value of the debate is that it does explain or hopefully will get to a point where we will as a country will be able to talk about what are the trade offs necessary. And there are a few practical problems. For example, first of all the Republic of Ireland is 67 per cent dependent on imported oil which is a huge vulnerability. Now in terms of the possible options on that in terms of renewables, the first problem there really is this is that it is already apparent that the growth of corn for ethanol production purposes is already pushing up the price of food and there is almost kind of a moral dimension to whether you should be growing crops for energy or for food security purposes.

The second is that in relation to wind, this is very much depending on issues like planning permission and the technical problem of spinning a reserve on an electricity system and the fact that the wind mightn't blow on the coldest day of the year but you have to cover that in any event. And according to the White Paper calculations, 4,000 mega watts of wind would be needed up to meet the 2020 targets of the White Paper and that realistically is not going to happen.

The other option is wave power and the White Paper calls for 70 mega watts of this by 2012 and 500 mega watts by 2020. Realistically wave power is about forty years away at the moment. There is a current project involving 300 kilo

watts that the ESB is involved in. It is absolutely inadequate and won't be delivered as a viable proposition for a very, very long time indeed. Now all of this has to be considered that the Government's White Paper didn't really take account of the population expansion. By the year 2026 forecast are that the Republic of Ireland will have a population of 5.5 million people, so this is an extremely serious challenge in that context and it may involve very serious lifestyle trade offs. If we decide against, for example, nuclear power what are we going to do instead? And that takes you to the question of sustainable development. I mean the philosophy of Government has been we put our foot to the floor, we get the highest rates of economic growth regardless of the costs of doing and producing that economic growth overall, whereas we might be better off to have a position say of trying to optimise economic growth for the future. But you can't actually have a debate about that because you are seen to be a luddite or not interested in the good things of society or jobs or anything like that if you even raise that question that question of the sustainability of economic growth. That's what we are trying to do. We are agnostic on nuclear power, personally I am against nuclear power, I hope we never have to have it, but we need to have that debate about the choices facing the country and it would be a public service I think to try to start that. I think we would do ourselves a disservice if we foreclose that discussion on nuclear power if we go along with the motion as it is and it is for those reasons that I would ask Tom and the Waterford Council of Trade Unions to consider allowing it to be remitted for further discussion. Tom said nuclear power is ten years away, actually I think it's longer. If you took all the licensing provisions and so on that you would have to do I think it is twenty years away. It is a long time but Ireland has to start thinking about how it is going to deal with the future and you can't start a legitimate debate by foreclosing on possible options no matter how unpalatable ultimately they might be. Thanks very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

There is a request for a remission.

Tom Hogan, Waterford Trades Council

The reason the Waterford Trades Council actually put in this motion is that it became concerned that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions were taking the lead in this debate, were advocating a public debate and that there was a sense that maybe the big guns of Congress were moving over towards a pro-nuclear decision. My job coming up here was to put this proposal to the Conference so that in the national debate that has ensued that the Congress has driven or perceived to have driven at least anyway, I mean its in all the papers, its on radio and television and what have you, that the main spokespeople for this movement should be, their position should be determined by this Conference in relation to nuclear power and I'd oppose the remit back and ask that the proposal be put.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, I am going to put the proposition of remission to Conference. Those in favour please show there is a proposal to remit the motion ok. It is not agreed by Waterford but it is proposed to Conference. Those against? The remission is carried narrowly but it is carried. Sorry, I am looking down at this side of the hall; you are looking at the hands on this side. I can call it again if you wish but it is definitely carried. Ok. I am going to call it again. All those in favour of remission please show, ok, I would ask you there on my side to have a look over ok. Those against? Ok will you accept now that it is remitted? Ok, thank you.

Waterford Trades Council again on the Shell to Sea issue.

Tom Hogan of Waterford Trades Council. Waterford Council of Trade Unions

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Waterford Council of Trade Unions calls on Conference to support the people of Rosspoint in their campaign to have the Corrib Gas Terminal and Pipeline located off shore and their health and safety concerns taken into account over that of the joint oil multi-national, Shell. The Corrib gas conflict has seen a number of local people jailed for over 90 days, attacked and assaulted by Gardai with the full support of Taoiseach Aherne for daring to oppose the building of this pipeline. It has caused deep division in the stress in the many small communities where this project is directly affecting them. The apparent silence of the official trade union movement last October when decent, hard working people, be they small land owners or retired schoolteachers or whatever their occupation were being attacked and assaulted by members of the Gardai, and I think that was very regrettable that we didn't come out more determinedly to condemn that thuggery. Michael McDowall, who the electorate rightly sent packing could hail the apparent suspension of the construction of the Poolbeg Incinerator a victory for local democracy and yet deny the same rights to the people of North Mayo. PD and Fianna Fail ministers in the last Government have insisted on the strategic importance of developing the Corrib Gas Field were attacking those who support the campaign against the present development proposals. The supporters of Shell are wrong on a number of counts. There is no opposition per se against the Corrib Gas Field but there is opposition on the specific processing proposals being made by Shell. Now over the last seven years with inquiries and mediation the bottom line for the people in that community is that they don't want a high pressure power pipeline next to their dwellings and they don't want the construction of a terminal and a refinery at Ballinaboy with its implications for air pollution and water pollution that affects local farming and fishing people involved in that. Also a consideration that they have is that the fact that licenses are being given out and the terms they are being given out on for exploration that is effectively robbing the people of this country of their natural resources. No strategic importance to do with the project has ever fully been demonstrated. In its security of the supply Bord Gais gets

most of its gas supply from the North Sea and there is no medium threat to the continuity of those supplies according to Bord Gáis. The cost of gas is set on international markets and the Corrib gas will be purchased at the full market rate. Are there significant financial benefits to this state? No royalties are being extracted, no equity share taken and no windfall taxes are being levied. All exploration and development costs can be written off against tax at 100 per cent from year one. Might there be jobs from the project? Minimal jobs in the short term construction phase and once it becomes operational fifty plus jobs will be required. Companies are not obliged to employ Irish workers on their exploration rigs or source supplies from Ireland. The reality is instead that instead of securing an indigenous gas supply that could be strategically used as a force of wealth; the Corrib has in fact been privatised and is in effect another source of imported gas to be bought at full market prices. The Waterford Council of Trade Unions welcomes Congress' call for the corporation tax to be extended to oil profits but feel that this fabulous resource that would be better off left in the ground to be exploited by a future generation rather than be given away for practically nothing. Move the motion, thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you. Now is it seconded? Yes. No speakers. Can I put the motion to Conference? All those in favour, against? Motion is carried. Thank you. I now move back to Motion 60, 61, 62, 63 and 64. Then I am going to give Eddie Matthews two or three minutes and then we will take the Emergency Motion. Ok.

Sheila Nunan, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Thank you President. Sheila Nunan, INTO. This motion is what Dan Murphy described on Tuesday as a set piece. Congress indeed has a policy on the issue of early childhood education but the set piece has to be dusted down and re-endorsed as we haven't yet succeeded at in convincing Government to share our view and to act on it. The motion is also important because it fits neatly into the broad common theme into the Congress debates this week in relation to privatisation, state intervention, public services, modernisation and regulation. There have been a number of competing demands articulated in recent days on transport, communication infrastructure, health, energy and water but children's needs are often ignored and I hope we will take this opportunity over the next two or three minutes to advocate on their behalf. We have been nibbling away at the edges of early childhood education in recent years but it has been driven in the main as supporting engagement of parents in the workforce by providing childcare places. It is economically driven not education driven. These are very badly needed places but in providing for them the state has demonstrated little or no concern about the education component. It is rightly responding to parents as workers but it is wrongly ignoring children as learners. Early childhood education is a tremendous opportunity for learning and development. Children learn through exploration and play, through trusting and respectful relationships. They

learn language, how to use it, how to interact with others, how to be creative and adventurous and here is the key point that I want to make, and it is an important one in rebalancing the debate. Early childhood is a meaningful life stage. It is a time of being not a time of becoming. And this is what we have to put in the centre of policy. We need to balance the debate between parents as workers who need support but we have to recognise the rightful right stage of children. They don't have a voice and we do have to advocate for them.

On the issue of privatisation, state policy in regard to early childhood education for three year olds in particular is of arms length support. Indirect support which is sometimes to throw a bucket of money at a target group and let them get on with it. The majority of the provision is done by private leading to market based solutions and it is ironic that at a stage when most scaffolding and mediating of learning is needed it is withheld and intensified when children are older. We therefore need to address the current inadequacies in our provision to ensure that they are on a par with at least EU standards. The INTO is asking for national provision of early childhood education, pre-school education to be available to all three year olds. At a very practicable and manageable we want to build on the learning experiences of the four to six year olds currently in our primary schools. The demand includes the extension of the current model for an optional three year model for children who require it and we want to ensure that the anomaly where in the private sector the regulation that requires adult to children ratios of 8:1 would be transferred into the school system where one adult is expected to deal with up to thirty infants in infant classes. We are reiterating our demands for suitable buildings and resources but most of all we are saying that as a profession that we are ready, willing, able and flexible to modernise our sector to ensure that three year olds can be incorporated and we will be happy to work and co-work with other professionals in the delivery of that service. Thank you Congress.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Is there a seconder for 60? Formally seconded. No other speakers on 60. Can I put 60, all those in favour, anyone against, abstentions? That's carried. Can I ask for the mover of 61?

Rene Prendergast, University & College Union

Rene Prendergast, University & College Union proposing Motion 61 on Privatisation. This motion deals mainly with privatisation in higher education which is something of an ongoing threat at the moment. And I want to use the opportunity of proposing this motion to reflect briefly on a number of ways in which privatisation is taking place in higher education. The first thing I want to talk about is privatisation of knowledge itself. Knowledge is a very peculiar good. If I have a bar of chocolate and I eat it nobody else can have it. But knowledge is different from that. If I use knowledge constructively or otherwise, other people

can use it as well and it is not exhaustible in the same kind of way. So knowledge is inherently a public good but that knowledge which traditionally freely available in the university sector is now increasingly becoming privatized. Big businesses want to gain property rights in various parts of the fundamental scientific knowledge being generated in the university sector. So that is one way in which privatisation is taking place. A second way in which privatisation is taking place is the decision about whether or not to avail of an university education is becoming a decision about investing in your human capital. In Northern Ireland and the UK at the moment people have to pay £3,000 per annum to avail of higher education. There is already talk about that figure going up and some universities want to be able to charge the price that their brand would bare in the market. I hear rumblings here again in this house, I notice the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin has been talking again about the need to reintroduce fees here essentially making education into a commodity, commercialising education making it a private decision rather than a means of transmitting social values.

Thirdly, universities are becoming very large employers. They are becoming very big businesses in their own right. Certainly in Northern Ireland the universities are amongst the largest businesses in existence and the largest employers. Increasingly like other businesses they are restructuring themselves and in recent months Queens University in Belfast has effectively contracted out all its catering and is currently talking about privatising its maintenance and what's happening there will no doubt will be happening elsewhere soon.

A fourth way in which privatisation is taking place and which is perhaps more important in the long run is that private firms are entering into the core business of education itself. At the moment to some extent they are just circling the fringes. They are trying to get in to the business of international market and education and recruiting international students providing them with English language courses but increasingly as these firms backed by venture capital and so forth gain experience they will be starting to compete as they see it for the core business of education itself. Just to say that the driver of all of this then is third level of education is an expanding area, people talk about fourth level education, both graduate education and so forth,

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Rene, please your time is up.

Rene Prendergast, University & College Union

It is an opportunity for big business to get in to a lucrative area. I think that has to be resisted. I move the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you. Seconded ok. Can I take the vote then on 61, all those in favour, and anyone against, abstentions? That's carried. 62, sorry for hassling people at the rostrum but we have no option if we are going to get through the business.

Declan Kelliher, Irish National Teachers Organisation

Declan Kelliher, Irish National Teachers Organisation. Our Conference this year is appropriately themed on equality but President the opportunity for equality for all of our nation's children comes only once during their lifetime and for many of those children it occurs during their eight years in primary education. Some children will never finish their second level education and many will never benefit from the massive level of investment which this state rightly makes in third level education. Therefore, if we as a trade union movement are serious about the promotion of equality then we must all support the ongoing public campaign by the INTO to fully and adequately resource primary education as the true path to equality for all. And to irradiate for once and for all in Irish society the scandal of overcrowded classes in our primary schools in the Republic. How can the needs of any child be met in an overcrowded classroom of 30 to 35 children. The INTO is proud of the fact that over the past two years we have prioritised class size and campaigned on it. We are proud that 200,000 parents supported our petition to Government on class sizes and we are also proud that over 18,000 members of the public came to our recent round of twenty-six public meetings held throughout the length and breadth of this country to protest against overcrowded classes. We are grateful for the support of many trade union members who attended these meetings and we do recognise now with some sense of satisfaction that the Programme for Government does include clear commitments to deal with primary class size but a promise made is not a promise delivered and we intend in the INTO to ensure that every shade of green in this Government will be roasted alive if the commitments to reduce class sizes are not met this time and we will seek the support of every union in the Congress of Trade Unions to ensure that the Government lives up to its responsibilities.

As a union our brief to represent goes well beyond our members. We also speak for the greatest asset that this country possesses and that is children irrespective of who they are, where they come from, children deserve the best chance to participate in society and they will not get that chance through education in overcrowded classrooms. In the area of special needs the Espon Act and the Disability Act are now being rolled out but the legislation will count for nothing unless they are properly resourced and unless the proper supports are put in place to implement those Acts. Thank you Chairperson. One final point I will make and that's simply is also, in relation to buildings that wherever buildings are planned schools must be planned and delivered on. Thank you for your time.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Seconded, ok. Can I put it to a vote, all those in favour of Motion 62 please show, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Can I take Motion 63 please.

Fred Brown, National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers

President, Fred Brown, NASUWT moving Motion 63 on Violent and Disruptive Pupils. Verbal and physical attacks on all public sector workers and indeed everybody working with the general public have increased over the years. These attacks take place on a daily basis. The teaching profession is particularly vulnerable not only with verbal and physical attacks but also with cyber bullying which was debated yesterday and the strategies which have been put in place to try to counter this have largely failed. And one of the major barriers to this is the absence of accurate data as to exactly what is happening. Most workplace records are not passed on to employing authorities and there is no standardised recording done and different schools have different ways of recording these things. It is not passed on. The most recent figures that we have been able to obtain from the Northern Ireland Assembly from Sammy Wilson who is the Chair of the Education Committee there, in 2004 and 2005 there were two hundred and sixty two recorded violent, physical attacks on teachers in Northern Ireland, seven of which resulted in the expulsion of the pupils concerned. That was seven violent physical attacks on teachers every week and only one in forty of the pupils responsible for those were removed from the school. And some of those were returned because of appeals panels and we know that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Some are, many are not reported. In fact most of the verbal assaults we have no figures at all for. This causes very high levels of stress not only to the other pupils in the classroom and also to the teachers and it is also one of the main reasons for early exits from the teaching profession. In cases where the schools and the employing authorities have refused to do anything about violent and disruptive pupils we in the NASUWT have conducted a number of refusals to teach campaigns and these have been largely very successful. In my career I have worked most of the time with emotional and behavioral, children with emotional and behavioral difficulties and in my experience the best thing that can happen is for them to be removed from the school where they are causing the problems. It allows them to have a new start, it allows the other pupils in the school to learn properly and it allows the teachers to teach without the high levels of stress which are involved in the constant fear of being attacked. Teachers cannot teach and pupils cannot learn if the teacher is at risk of being subjected to attacks and recent legislation is going to make it more difficult to expel pupils from schools. I believe and I would like Conference to endorse that there should be an All Ireland public registrar of attacks on teachers and other workers, other public sector workers as well and private sector workers. And the policy of this body should be that those who are offered violent, verbal or physical violence,

should not work with those people. They should not give their services to the people who attack them in this way. I move.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

We have a formal seconder, yes you can come forward.

Paul Hansard, Services, Industrial Professional Trades Union

Thank you for the opportunity to speak Chairman. I am seconding this motion. Paul Hansard, SIPTU, Dublin Construction Branch speaking on the motion. Violence and disruption in school communities is on the increase to a serious extent. Teachers, pupils and other members of the schools community are entitled to protection from this type of behaviour. A right to safety in work places in schools is a basic human right and it is the responsibility of the education authorities to ensure that those rights are protected. Pupils are entitled to learn in an environment conducive to learning and teachers are entitled to work in an environment free from intimidation, threats and assault. This kind of behaviour cannot be tolerated. However, expelling young people from school onto the street is not the answer. People work in education know that long term suspension and expulsion where no alternative is on offer will have disastrous consequences both for the youngsters concerned and for society. Young people present with emotional and behavioural needs in our schools do so because of total breakdown of relationships in their home life or because of serious psychological or psychiatric problems for which they have received little or no help. Those children arrive in secondary school having gone through a primary school system that has been unable to help them, not because of lack of interest on the part of the teacher but because the facilities and structures aren't there to help them. There is a total refusal by the Education Health Authority to face up to their responsibilities in this area. It is recognised that the children's psychiatric services is the most neglected area of the health services in the Republic. That surely says something. In places like Kilkenny where original services existed in the past that service has been run down. In many areas the HSE is unable to provide psychiatric help for children and the work has to be contracted out to private bodies like the John of Gods Menni service. In Northern Ireland children can wait up to three years for help and what happens when children wait their problems get worse with consequences for everybody who has contact with the child. Their fellow pupils, teachers, family and neighbours. So the child's ADHS anger management needs wait while the schools encourage his/her parents to get the family doctor to refer to the child to the Menni service and that the child can go on to a waiting list sometimes for up to two years. Chairman, I am finished. ICTU must priorities the development of children's psychiatric service both North and South. Throwing young children out on the street without having an alternative on offer is not the answer. The minister and Government are to blame here, put the blame where the blame lies. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Can I put Motion 63 to Conference. All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions. That is carried. I now move to take Motion 64 in the name of the Sligo Trades Council. I am going to follow that then Eddie with you and then take the Emergency Motion.

Frank Cammock, Belfast & District Trades Council

Conference, President, delegates, Frank Cammock, Belfast & District Trades Council moving the motion on behalf of Sligo Trades Council. The motion addresses the issue of paid learning leave. We in Belfast agree with our comrades in Sligo. This is a very important issue. Ministers and Government lecture us about the need to develop new skills. Working class people cannot afford to take time off work. What we need is employers and Government to underpin the development of new skills and knowledge with funding. Knowledge should not just be about learning workplace skills, it should be learning issues like common history and learning about the history of this island. And we should also be educating ourselves about issues like the European Union so that we factually know the problems and develop arguments to further the needs of working class people. Conference support the motion and support the issue of educating, and free education for everyone. Thank you Conference.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

We have a speaker to second.

Fidelma Carlon, UNISON

Fidelma Carlon, UNISON supporting the motion. UNISON is a public sector union with many part time, low paid women workers and there is a strong correlation between low pay and low educational attainment in formal education. We have been working very hard in trying to upskill our members at all levels but particularly for those who have had few or no qualifications to get them on the first step of the learning ladder. When I talk to members who already are professionally qualified or who are already university qualified they talk about their careers. When I talk to cleaners, home care workers, people working in kitchens, they talk about jobs. They don't see themselves having a career and that just isn't right. They should have the same aspirations to a career and chances from life long learning as everybody else. UNISON has a very unique project with the Open University, where we have put nearly 300 members through Open University courses. Within the health sector came 100 and something health and social care, we negotiated time off with employers, we built in study leave, we have built in an exam preparation day. We had 75 per cent of the people who undertook that course had left with five GSEs. That is an average inter or junior cert. This was a course with seven assignments and one three

hour exam at university level. We had an 85 per cent completion rate and 98 per cent pass rate – way above the national average. And this was in partnership with the Open University and with the employers. We also tried to do the same with classroom assistants but we weren't able to negotiate paid time off so we worked with them, we enabled them to access the courses in early years and we supported them where we could. When we only a 40 per cent completion rate because those classroom assistants, many of whom had second jobs, had family commitments were unable to maintain the study required to complete the course. It shows that if we can provide paid reliefs and work with employers then we can support our members to achieve. Support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, I am going to put Motion 64, all those in favour please show, all those against, any abstentions? That's carried.

I am going to invite Eddie Matthews to addresses Conference on behalf of the Congress Youth Committee. He is the only person who didn't get an opportunity on behalf of the Committees.

Edward Matthews, Congress Youth Committee

Thank you Mr President, we are very grateful of the opportunity and I am very grateful of the opportunity to address you on behalf of the Congress Youth Committee in the South and I bring greetings from the Youth Committee in the North. Of course it is of continuing concern to the Committee that the young delegates and in particular young women delegates are in short numbers at the Conference but we are happy with opportunity to address you.

The activities of the Youth Committee mainly revolve around the advisory function we perform to the Executive Council of Congress. We also lobby very effectively and you will excuse me for speaking very fast but I have a very limited time, but we lobby very effectively within other Youth organisations within Ireland and within the European domain in relation to the position of young workers and the issues affecting young workers in society. I won't bore you with the lament regarding low participation levels of young people within the trade union movement save to make a very serious suggestion and request from both Youth Committees to every trade union which is here. We are asking you to make provisions in every local organisational structure within your trade unions for a youth representative to be elected because it is not sufficient as was outlined by Niall Crowley earlier this week to equality of opportunity, because equality of opportunity is not bringing young people to leadership or even positions of responsibility or voice within the trade union movement. We ask you to provide a reserve seat at each organisational structure within your union. We also ask where it is not present for you to make provision for a seat at Executive Council level for a young person at your union. It is lamentable of course that we

continue to be unable as well and it would be remiss of me not to say this to Congress as well, we have been unable to achieve an observer seat or advice seat at the Executive Council level within Congress. We find ourselves in a very invidious position. We are unable as a Committee to move a motion to Conference, we are unable to get enough senior people in unions to move a motion on our behalf, so we would ask the incoming leadership to champion that issue and to enter into a real debate with us on that subject so that we can have our voice heard.

Our particular concerns to young people within society, colleagues, are the many issues facing us such as the ravages of drugs and alcohol abuse affecting young people in society. The eternal trap of poverty begetting poverty within society and the particular affects that has on young people. The level of social exclusion we face, the level of particular social exclusion for low skilled young people within society. We have a persistence even with all the progressive achievements within our society of low pay and precarious employment for young people. We also have, despite our low unemployment rate; it must be acknowledged the unemployment rate for young people is double that of their senior colleagues and that is grossly unacceptable. And of particular concern, colleagues, is the continuing persistence of sub-minimum wage rates and we must erode those and these lead to demographic challenges within society.

Colleagues, finally I wish to thank the Congress staff for their facilitation of our work and their encouragement. Of particular note is the commitment of Mr Gareth Keogh who I must acknowledge his work and commitment because he is leaving Congress. The recruitment strategy places us at the heart of the work and we appreciate that. Our continued work you can be assured of and your support as trade unions we look forward to.

In conclusion colleagues, we strive for equality as young people and I have happy to have addressed you in the year of Equality for All given that age is a discriminatory factor and given the low numbers of young people at the Conference. We strive for equality. Colleagues, senior officers of Congress and trade union leaders, obviously the achievement of that equality lies in your hands and we very much look forward to your support in the coming years. Thank you President for the opportunity.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much Eddie and again our thanks to you and your colleagues on the Committee for the tremendous work you do on our behalf. Thank you.

Now can I take the Emergency Motion in the name of the CWU please? Then I am going to move to Motion 23 and take it from there.

Eamon Cooke, Communication Workers Union, UK

President, Conference, Eamon Cooke on behalf of the Communication Workers Union UK to move the Emergency Motion and to thank Conference and Standing Orders for allowing us to have the Emergency Motion heard.

Conference, we would like to seek your support in the Communication Workers Union's current dispute with Royal Mail over the future of the postal service and post office network. On Friday past, 28 June, 92 per cent of membership of 130,000 postal and counter staff took part in the first official national postal dispute since 1990. I would just like to put on record our thanks to various unions that supported us and who emailed letters of support last week on that day. Yesterday in London, the National Executive of the CWU met to decide the next steps of the dispute and an industrial strike will now take place on 12/13 July, next Thursday and Friday. There is some ambiguity as regards to where the postal staff in the North of Ireland because it's a public holiday there but I will get back to you on that issue.

This industrial action is being taken on the back and the reasons of lies, deceit and propaganda set out by Royal Mail. Royal Mail has stated that the union, the CWU, want a pay raise of 27 per cent that is not the case at all. We have indeed asked for an application based pay rise and at present Royal Mail have offered an insulting 2.5 per cent, effectively a pay cut to the members. This couple with a list of strings too numerous to mention. Royal Mail has stated that to survive and then meet the pension scheme deficit they must stop the pension scheme final salaries to new entrants. The reality of this Conference is that Royal Mail backed by the Government took a twelve year pension holiday where they didn't pay a single cent into the pension scheme and now they insist that the members must pay that deficit. Royal Mail state that we will need to face change to deal with competition. The reality Conference is that even that with the union backing we couldn't fight competition because of the unfair restrictions that the Government Regulator posed on Royal Mail. So unfair that while the likes of DHL, TNT, tender and win contracts against Royal Mail because they don't have the infrastructure and the ability to deliver that mail to you the customer, they are allowed to put it back into the postal service because the Government have insisted that Royal Mail have a universal service obligation which it must deliver to every home every single day. Royal Mail state that they must close 2,500 post office counters and franchise 70 Crown offices to WH Smiths to make it more profitable. The reality is Conference that post office counters is £40 million a head for their budget for this year alone and closing these post offices will have a devastating affect on jobs, it will have a devastating affect on service provisions across the UK especially the vulnerable communities. Royal Mail under the guise of modernisation plan to introduce a cost cutting business plan. The reality of that Conference is that this business plan will cut 40,000 jobs across the UK and the North of Ireland. The communication workers are not opposed to modernisation. We accept that the new technology and we accept machinery so

much that last year, 2006, we met with Royal Mail, we agreed a terms of reference and we sat down and jointly signed an agreement which would allow both the move and the modernisation programme jointly. Everyone was supposed to consult and negotiate all those changes. Royal Mail has now reneged and has moved their Executive action. This is the reason for the industrial dispute and the strike action we need to take now.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Can I ask you to wind up please? You are well over the time.

Eamon Cooke, Communication Workers Union, UK

We ask you support along with the Northern Ireland Officer to maximise pressure on Royal Mail, to stop the post office closures, to get a review of the post office network with PostCom and to bring it to the attention of all in the North. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much. Can I just take that as, take a formal seconder please? Ok and can I put it to the vote. All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried and you can carry the good wishes of the ICTU Conference in your campaign.

I am now going to move to Motions 23. Can I ask people to please stick to the times, ok, please?

Barnaba Dorada, Services, Industrial, Professional Trades Union

Barnaba Dorada, SIPTU. On behalf of SIPTU I am moving Motion 23. President, delegates, during Conference other speakers have spoken on the employment agency issue. Providing legislation for equal treatment for agency workers employed by employment agencies is a matter of urgency. I am sure there is no doubt about it. Even the Taoiseach in his speech, I believe acknowledge that something must be done. But in my speech I want to give you a slightly different view on that topic from the migrant workers sight. I am a migrant worker; I came from another country, from Poland, from a different culture. I have been in Ireland for two years. And of course for me and my Polish colleagues I am surprised. I am not talking about left handed traffic but about legislation concerning employment agencies which is almost forty years old. I was really surprised when I realised that here in Ireland agency workers could be treated differently than their colleagues employed directly by normal companies. That means that agency workers and direct employees are working side by side in the same workplace doing the same kind of job in the same personal circumstances for months and months, even for years, and they are

treated differently. And it's not discrimination or I should add it is not discrimination. Employers in Ireland are using the mechanism of agency to diminish protection of employment and remove good pay and conditions for which the trade union movement fought for the last couple of centuries. It is interesting that in Ireland, which has almost 6 million population, there are 520 employment agencies while in Poland 40 million citizens, we have only 400. In Poland we filtered the issue of outsources recently at the end of the nineties and at that time we did not have proper legislation concerning temporary workers employed by agencies. In fact we didn't have any but very soon that became the agent in public debate with trade unions and Government and at the end of 2003 Poland passed a new Bill. It then became beyond dispute that agency workers should be treated equally. It was so natural that nobody argued against it. So we have provision that does not allow discrimination of agency workers. From day one agency workers and direct employees have exactly the same rights in the workplace. This is in Ireland far more important than it is in Poland as in Ireland most of agency workers are migrants who are looking at better treated Irish colleagues employed directly through a normal company. We must unite permanent and agency workers to secure equal terms and conditions and laws to enforce this. It is time to achieve legislation that outlaws the discrimination. I strongly please to support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much. Ok, you are coming to second the motion, two minutes please.

Daniel Konieczny, UNISION

President, Conference Daniel Konieczny, UNISION representative. Originally from Poland, I have been in Northern Ireland since 2005. I work as a migrant support worker in Lisburn. I would like to talk about migrant workers and employment agencies. I would like to start by sharing some of the experience of migrant workers I know. They were employed by recruitment agencies to work in a computer factory and were promised a contract after twelve weeks but when the twelve weeks ended, they were all sacked for two days and then reemployed but were told they had to work for another twelve weeks before they could get a contract. This happened again and again and they were never given contracts. This meant that they got no overtime or holidays or rights such as maternity leave or right to claim unfair dismissal. Other indigenous people working in the factory did have contracts. They were afraid to join trade unions because the agency told them that if you join a union you will get sacked because the factory management don't like unions. For me myself I have an interview in Poland with an agency. The interview was in English and there was an interpreter. I didn't speak any English but the person interviewing just explained what the job was about and how much I would be paid. I thought it sounded really good. I was very excited about coming to Northern Ireland. My dream was to learn English. I

was given a contract in English and told to sign it. I did this but I couldn't read it. I find out afterward that I must pay £100 per week for accommodation and flight for sixteen weeks which was £1,600. The accommodation was a three bed roomed house with six people sharing. After tax I was earning £180 per week. The contract said that the agency would organise the interview with the job centres so that I could get my national insurance number and home office working registration scheme but they never did this. The Home Office is very important because as you know you can work for only four weeks without Home Office approval. After that you are illegal. As soon as you get home office reference number you can apply for other jobs which are better paid. That's why we need to fight for basic rights for workers who come through the agency. If agencies are allowed to exploit migrant workers, it also affects local workers who will be forced to work for less to compete and will lose out overtime which agency will get migrant workers to do. Because they don't have to pay them extra. I ask Conference to support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, can I put Motion 23, all those in favour please show, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Can I offer on your behalf our warm congratulations to both speakers for coming here and telling us their story. Motion 24, Joe is going to move this.

Joe O'Flynn, SIPTU and Congress Treasurer

Joe O'Flynn, SIPTU, President, proposing the motion on behalf of our colleagues in the R&T. I think, President, the motion very much speaks for itself in relation to the exploitation of seafarers and I think the Irish Ferries dispute did very much to highlight the exploitation generally amongst seafarers but in particular the exploitation of vulnerable migrant labour being used through agencies to drive down pay and conditions of seafarers generally. I think that while the Irish Ferries highlighted the proposal to obviously displace 540 odd permanent workers with agency workers being paid less than half the Irish minimum wage, the fact is that there is much greater exploitation actually taking place day in day out and in many circumstances seafarers not actually receiving any payment at all for months on end depriving them and their families at home of the means for a decent livelihood. And I think, colleagues, that it is much greater a burden on seafarers many of whom are actually even denied shore leave to expose the exploitation by the captains of the ships and indeed the agencies that employ them and I think this campaign is something that all of us will have to support vigorously to highlight this massive exploitation that is taking place, particularly in the Irish seas but beyond. And the flag of convenience campaign has to succeed in highlighting this exploitation. I want to conclude Chair, conscious of the time, by saluting the courage of the seafarers who stand up to this exploitation and in particular I want to salute the work of the officials and the ITF inspectors who day

in day out face very difficult intimidating and often life threatening situations in defending the rights of workers standing up for their entitlements. I commend the motion to you and I ask you colleagues to support it. Go raibh maith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Seconded, can I then put it to a vote? All those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Can I call on the INO to move Motion 25 please.

Regina Durkan, Irish Nurses Organisation

Regina Durkan, Irish Nurses Organisation. President, delegates in the context of national agreements and the criteria for the processing of claims for improved pay and conditions, the INO believes that there is a very strong and compelling case for the improved coordination of bargaining on conditions of employment in sectors of the economy and we are asking Conference to adopt this motion and thereby request the incoming Executive Council to put structures in place to facilitate this. We believe this improved coordination is necessary in order to maximise the potential possible for individuals and groups of unions arising from the procedures and processes that now exist to make progress on claims for improved pay and conditions. As a movement, in the context of these national structures, we must endeavour to ensure that unions act as cohesively as possible and avoid any situation where the efforts of one union can be compared and contrasted by employers with the efforts of another union. While this might sound a simple and straightforward task, it is our belief that there is a compelling need for greater coordination and that Congress must have a central role in a greater level of coordination between unions who are pursuing similar claims in the various sectors of the economy. There is no point whatsoever in creating a situation where the only beneficiaries of union strategies that have not been the subject of coordination and consultation are employers who will seek in their first line of defence to highlight the fact that any given claim has a multi-union dimension and a cross-sectoral implication. If such an implication exists then surely as a union movement we must prepare for that and factor into our approach to the processing of claims which are at the end of the day aimed at improving the terms and conditions of our members. An example of this required level of cooperation in the past was when both the public and private sector committees of Congress met ahead of national negotiations in order to agree the priority agenda for the forthcoming discussions with employers and Government. The INO believes at this time Congress must pay greater attention to this preparation so that claims of common concern to more than one union are approached in a collective and cohesive manner and pursued on a collective basis though the procedures available under national agreements. This movement has chosen and benefited from successive national agreements which require a collective and coherent approach to the processing of all issues on behalf of our members. The longer we use this Social Partnership model the greater the level of collaborative working is required amongst unions to ensure

that we maximise the gains possible for our members in relation to all terms and conditions of employment. It is our belief that the Executive Council should prioritise the need for this for this greater level of cooperation and I therefore call upon you to support the motion. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you very much indeed. Is that seconded. Ok, we will call the vote on it. All those in favour of 25, anyone against, any abstentions. That's carried. 26 in the name of the CPSU.

Eoin Ronyane, Civil and Public Services Union

Eoin Ronyane, Civil Public Services Union. Motion 26 goes to the heart of what this trade union movement is all about. Nothing will ensure our relevance to workers more than our ability and commitment to tackle the pay agenda and in the context of another pay round we must send a clear and unequivocal message out to workers inside and outside this movement that we are serious about tackling low pay. In particular we must tackle the growing income gap between the higher paid and those at the bottom of the pay ladder. Lower paid workers have not secured their fair share of the success of this economy. If anything that very success has highlighted the gap between the rich and the less well off. Amid all the opulence and excess that is so evident in parts of Dublin and other urban centers, we read in a recent survey that one in five people feel financially insecure. Many of these are younger workers earning below 35,000 a year with either crippling mortgages, which by the end of the year will be a least ten increases since our last Conference in Belfast, if we are to go by the predictions, or facing crippling rents topped up with childcare cost which eat up to 20 per cent of their pay. And it is these workers on lower wages who feel the brunt of the stealth taxes. Viewed against that reality and an inflation rate that is now breaking five per cent, the increases in T16 do sound a bit hollow. From a public service point of view it is even more galling for our members to have to have to pass the better value test set by Department Secretary Generals to even secure those insufficient pay awards. Any new set of talks must revisit the performance verification system to ensure that it focuses on public service outputs rather than the achievement of often unrealistic internal targets set by senior departmental management. Far too often our members are threatened with the non payment of awards while those responsible for managing the verification process escape negative assessment for their own performance. Colleagues, that must change. A fundamental element of the disparity between the lower paid and high earners is the gender pay gap. The work women do in greater numbers than their male counterparts is more likely to be undervalued. A UK report from the Women at Work Commission found that a key part of the gender pay gap was that skills required of women working in cleaning, catering, caring and clerical work were not rewarded to the same extent as similar skill levels found in jobs where men are employed in greater numbers. Colleagues,

we believe it is impossible to close that gap where the market is left to its own devices rewarding higher paid predominantly male workers. We must use any new round of talks to discriminate in favour of the lower paid and to seek a revaluation in pay terms of skills used by women in their work. Not for the first time we say its time for the leadership of this movement to set the interests of the lower paid above all others. This may not be to the likening of some higher paid trade unionists but so be it. Persistently we have called for flat rate increases to be a feature of national pay deals. And while there was a low paid supplement in t16, it fell somewhat sort of what was needed of we are to seriously tackle the pay gap. We must continue to push for a breakthrough and build on that modest gain in T16, couple with the bold initiative on flat rate increases, we must secure a reversal of the stealth tax increases which so discriminate against the lower paid. The CPSU calls again for a widening of the tax bands to bring up to 80 per cent of PAYE workers within the lower tax rate. Tax threshold must be increased which tax relief has to be a factor in relieving the pressure.

Colleagues, it is time for us not to allow some employers and elements of the media to drive a wedge between public and private sector workers. We must work together to end low pay. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Can I take it that that's seconded. Are you speaking to second. Ok, come forward. All we can allow is about two minutes ok.

Evelina Savuikyte, Services, Industrial, Professional Trades Union

Evelina Savuikyte, SIPTU. President, delegates, as migrant myself I can tell you that before I became SIPTU Organiser, for five years I was on minimum pay. No overtime, no Sunday premium. Although at some stage hotels JLC said I was entitled to all of them. It is assumed that we are happy to live on just on bread and water and as water is free in this country we are very happy to buy some extra bread. I have to say as well that at time I was promised a managerial position with €20,000 a year, that was my happy day. Low paid workers cannot afford any form of paid childcare or to ever dream of owning their own home. If a worker is on minimum wages and crèche cost in Dublin around €200 in Dublin, that is more than 50 per cent of someone's minimum wage. In Europe it is only 8 per cent. Migrants are unlucky in a way cause we can't rely on our family support here as Irish. Believe me, not every mother in Lithuania dreams of leaving her world behind and come here to mind her grandchildren. I want to ask you dear delegates why in Ireland do we only have private, extremely expensive childcare and community childcare. In my country Lithuania we have of course other problems but since I was a child I remember going to a public crèche, not community but public funded by Government. Department of Education funds education. In terms of education there are two words as I

understand it – schools and crèches. Here Government gives huge grants to private employers but I can't understand why they want to wash their hands from making it their responsibility to look after our future generation. We in SIPTU see people working eighty hours a week for just two euros an hour and I witness every day three families sharing one three bedroom apartments. It is ok for young and single ones but not for families. Families should concentrate on raising their families and not wonder with fear who will be my next room mate, will he drink, will he abuse my children or will he pay his rent. They and many like them have no absolute chance of ever buying a home of their own. I will not talk about property prices here because I am sure you know and this topic gets me even frustrated. But I just want to tell you this that one day I opened the Metro paper and there was an ad for affordable housing in Blanchardstown and I thought maybe I should try and see, maybe you know I could get this beautiful house and what happened was that I opened the web site and the main criteria to get listed is for a single person you have to earn €45,000 a year so come someone who earns less than €20,000 can afford a house. Which part of this house is affordable, a kitchen? It is therefore imperative that the affordable initiative extended to make home ownership a reality for lower income groups. Equally, affordable quality childcare has to be acceptable to all and this can only be achieved by the elimination of low pay and exploitation of migrant workers. Please support the motion. Go raibh maith agat.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

I am going to put Motion 26, all those in favour please show, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Thank you. I am now taking Motion 28 on behalf of the Galway Trades Council. Nobody? That falls. Can I take 29 on behalf of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Eric Fleming, Dublin Council of Trade Unions

This motion is calling for a central register of occupational illness, diseases and deaths in all occupations but the only occupation I can speak with authority about is the construction industry. You have seen out there all week a Construction Workers Health stand. That's owned exclusively by the workers. Workers pay for that Health Trust and through its activities that Health Trust has done tremendous work. It is actually established that there is chronic illness amongst building workers in the construction industry. We done several surveys and we proved beyond all doubt that there is a very, very great case for some proper investigation as to how building workers have to go to their lives in the construction industry. There are categories of workers in the construction industry who actually automatically practically get sick at 52 or 53 years of age. Scaffolders would be a very good example with very bad backs. You very, very rarely meet an older scaffolder without a bad back and when I say a bad back I am not talking about a little pain, I am talking about people being practically crippled. The same would apply to the situation with regard to chemicals in the

construction industry. There are many, many workers who leave that industry, very silently without telling anybody, because they got dermitis. So across the board we are saying it's not really good enough for all of these illnesses, accidents, as I pointed out and medical conditions to just go on willy nilly. It's extremely important I think to all the workers in the construction industry, in my case I am speaking about the construction industry, that we are seen to actually act on more than just deaths or injuries or accidents on building sites. So I am asking you for your full support. Our Trust has I think shown the way and the Government I believe has a major responsibility in this that we push it. I have a good feeling in my bones that we are going to make some progress on this on behalf of not just construction workers but on behalf of everybody. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much indeed Eric. Seconded. Ok, can I have the vote, all those in favour, against, any abstentions? That's carried. Motion 30 then on behalf of the IBOA.

Tommy Kennedy, Irish Bank Officials Union

Thank you President. Tommy Kennedy, IBOA. Delegates, in the last year there has been a substantial increase in the number of bank robberies, raids, hijackings and kidnappings of staff working in the financial services industry. The health and safety of our members and of our colleagues in other unions are being put in danger because of the cost cutting by profitable financial institutions. Financial institutions must be made to understand that they cannot get away with putting employees' health and safety in risk in order to make even greater profits for corporate shareholders. We have made representations on behalf of our members to politicians and Government minister in the Republic of Ireland and also in Northern Ireland. Our objective is to bring about change in the legislation that would provide IBOA members who are subject to these raids and to other serious incidents in their workplaces with greater protection and security. IBOA has called for the establishment of a forum involving all the stakeholders, staff, customers and the major players in the industry to review and address the issue of staff security and safety in the workplace. By supporting this union we are mandating Congress to use its good offices to actively lobby both Government and the banks in achieving this review to ensure our members can go to work, carry out their duties safely without the fear that their lives and health and safety are at risk. Safety and security are firmly at the top of our union's agenda and at our own recent conference delegates passed a motion that if the banks did not provide proper home security for staff by September 1st of this year, IBOA would instruct our members not to act as key holders. It is clear to IBOA that there is a need for a fundamental review of current key holding policy as the current policy is clearly putting our members lives and those of their families at risk. The issue of staff security is a major concern for IBOA and staff fears have been

heightened by the recent trend is so called 'tiger kidnappings'. Every time another incident happens our offices are inundated with calls from worried staff and their families who are literally in fear of their lives because of these raids. The fact that our members and their families are regarded as particularly vulnerable and viewed as a soft target by criminal gangs should waken up bank management to the dangers the staff have to live through in their working day. In the view of many staff the banks are just focused on cutting costs and merely paying lip service to their staffs' concerns about their health and safety. There is an urgent need to address this issue and IBOA is anxious to pursue a collaborative approach with the Gardai, PSNI, and the relevant Government departments and ministers and the banking industry as a whole. As a union we are prepared to work with the banks and the Government agencies on this issue but the focus must be on the health and safety of our members and not cutting costs. I ask you to support the motion.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you very much indeed. Is this to second? Thank you.

Kevin McMahon, Services, Industrial, Professional Trades Union

Kevin McMahon, SIPTU to seconding the motion which in addition to banking staff raises major health and safety concerns for our members in the cash in transit section of the private security industry who have been subject to ongoing repeated attacks by criminal gangs over the last five years. The nature and type of these attacks which have involved both the threat and use of firearms have resulted in our members being exposed to unacceptable high levels of risk and have resulted in significant numbers of our members being either physically or psychologically injured in the course of the attacks. Indeed some of our members have been so traumatised by these attacks that they have been unable to return to work with the consequence that they have effectively lost their jobs as a result of these experiences. Now in response to these attacks our union has been demanding both of the Government and the Minister for Justice that greater resources be given to the Gardai to put these criminal gangs behind these attacks out of business. We have also been making demands of the cash in transit companies, the banks and other users of the services to improve their systems and standards of security and safety to minimise the risk of attacks. Now belatedly last year the resources were given to the Gardai to take on these criminal gangs and there has been in the case of the cash in transit industry a marked reduction in the attacks but quite clearly where the security has improved in one sector we can see that the criminal gangs will go elsewhere and target what they would deem as other soft targets. In addition we have been engaged in a process over the last year of agreeing hire systems of security and safety with the other players in the industry, the employers, the Gardai and the Private Security Authority and we are now at the stage where these new systems will become mandatory under a licensing system by the PSA which will take place in

the next number of months. So a start has been made in terms of addressing and creating a safer environment for our members in the Cash in Transit industry but a lot more needs to be done. We need to get ongoing assurances from the Gardai that the support and protection that they give will be sufficient to deter the threat from criminal gangs. We need to get an understanding from, I'll sum up now, and we need to get an understanding from the users from the service that the cost will be borne in higher prices for the services. We need access to bus lanes, we need the use of designated parking spaces so as to minimise the risk of armed attacks and we also need an ongoing review of the security and safety systems. We would accept that the forum that's being proposed by the IBOA is the appropriate vehicle for this and we would ask for support for that.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much. Can I put Motion 30 to a vote. All those in favour please show, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Final motion in this section is in the name of the Guinness Staff Union, Sean.

Sean Mackell, Guinness Staff Union

President, colleagues, Sean Mackell, Guinness Staff Union to move resolution 31 in relation to the mandatory testing of workers for alcohol in the workplace, and we bring this resolution to the attention of Congress because it is our view that the mandatory testing of workers for alcohol in their systems is a breach of their human rights and Congress should oppose this provision like many of our colleague unions do across the world. Colleagues may not be aware but one of the main provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 in the Republic states in Section 13, an employee while at work shall, and here I will quote from the act 'submit to any appropriate test for intoxicants'. This part of the Act gives an employer the right to test an employee for alcohol in their system and if you refuse to participate in a test then the law is quite clear – you commit an offence. The penalty for not taking the test, you are liable for a criminal conviction, a possible fine of up to €3,000 or you can go to jail for six months and you are also liable for the sack. Let's get one thing clear from the start, this is not about a union that represents workers in the alcohol industry trying to guard the product that our members make. This is about preventing employers using the refusal of workers to submit themselves to evasive tests to sack difficult staff. Colleague unions across the world oppose this approach. They argue that the issue is not whether you have a small level of alcohol in your system but rather the question is if its presence impairs your ability to do your job or put you or your colleagues at risk. And let me tell you a little about the testing procedure. The test itself is hugely invasive. It usually means drawing blood from a worker or taking a urine sample. The National Work Rights Institute of America recently published a letter from someone who had undergone an alcohol test and part of the letter read, 'I waited for the attendant to turn her back before pulling down my pants. She told me that she had to watch everything I did. I am a forty year old

mother of three. Nothing I have ever done in my life equals or deserves the humiliation, derogation and mortification I felt'. There you have it. The mortification in front of an attendant who has to watch so that you don't interfere with the sample, it's like the Olympics. But it doesn't stop there. Recently the Transport and General Workers Union in England reported concerns raised by bus and transport drivers about employer insensitivity when demanding urine tests from women during their periods. It could even be worse. In August, 2003, an Amicus member Scott's Rail fitter Crawford Tees hanged himself at home after being sacked for a breach of his company's no alcohol policy. And what is the view of the international labour movement and I have one eye on the clock. In Canada the Alberta Federation of Labour Committee and other workers unions have come out against the testing. The Supreme Court of Canada has recently ruled against it. The Ontario Human Rights Commission says it is the Commission's view that such testing is prima facie discrimination. In New Zealand, in Finland, in France, in Belgium, unions take a similar point of view and the International Transport Workers Federation said that trend of the sector towards zero tolerance drugs and alcohol policies linking directly to disciplinary action are a violation of privacy and individual civil liberties and I will finish on this point. But where would this unfair workplace testing actually stop? The ILO has recently warned about gene machine which test your genes and then advises your potential employers that you come from stock that is prone or like to develop an illness or disease. You can then weed out the weak and disable. That is the next step. Let me tell you this. This movement has a proud history of standing up for all sections of society. A core principle of the trade union movement is that the strong helps the weak. That is why we have to say no to compulsory health testing, be it alcohol or anything else. I ask you for your support, thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much Sean. Ok, seconded. Ok, I am going to call the vote, all those in favour of 31, and anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Can I now just seek approval for the relevant sections of the Executive Report of Section 3, Chapter 1 on Pay on the Workplace, Improving Working Conditions, Chapter 4, Employment Rights, Chapter 5 on Representation and Dispute Resolution. Are they all agreed? Good.

We have four motions left colleagues on Equality and I am proposing to take those in order that we can complete the business. I know time is moving on but I just ask speakers to try and be as brief as they can and maybe at this stage we will rule out the need for a seconder, just deal with opposition. So could we have the PSEU to move Motion 4 and there is an amendment from the TEEU as well. And it's Motions 5,6 and 7 and then we are competing. Have we got a mover? Yes, Patricia.

Patricia Tobin, Public Services Executive Union

President, delegates, Patricia Tobin, PSEU proposing Motion 4. The motion calls for action from Government and employers in three specific areas. The development of measures to support work life balance, the development of practical measures to support people with disabilities to participate fully in the workplace and swift action to be taken to finalise arrangements for pensions in the public service. Over the past number of years Irish society has changed dramatically with the increase in population, the arrival of thousands of migrant workers from both within European Union and further afield and the economic boom which has resulted in practically full employment. However, this is now causing new problems for workers who are struggling to reconcile work and family responsibilities. The traditional model where men went to work and the wife stayed at home to look after the family is longer the norm and is more likely to be the exception. However, in the Civil Service we have managed to negotiate some family friendly policies including work sharing and career breaks etc but even in the civil service we have had recent hostility to any attempts to improve on these and we have had restrictions on some departments on our members availing of them and these measures are far from the norm in the private sector and there needs to be some measures brought into place to allow people who are out at work to reconcile their work and family lives. Despite the accelerated growth over the last number of years people with disabilities are continuing to face many barriers in their endeavours to participate in the workplace while 8.5 per cent of people in the recent census classed themselves as being unemployed. In the 15-64 age group only 38 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women with disabilities are in employment and it is not acceptable in this time of economic prosperity and increasing levels of job creation that this should continue to be the case. There needs to be measures taken now by both Government and employers to make it easy for people with disabilities to take their place in the workplace and to improve their quality of life. The third area of action in the motion is in relation to pension and many families in Ireland today are based in non-marital relationships. Dependence in these cases do not enjoy the same protection under the public service pensions scheme as spouses and children where the pensioner dies the partner has no right to benefit from the pension. A Working Party on dependent's benefits set up following the report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions is currently examining the issue and it is imperative that steps are now taken to finalise arrangements for dependent's pensions in order to prevent people being reduced to a life of poverty on the death of their partners. And of course any provision in this area must benefit all non marital partners, both same sex partners and heterosexual partners. I urge you to support the motion, thank you.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thank you very much indeed. I just take it that that is formally seconded and I am going to take the amendment from the TEEU please.

Frances Lenihan, Technical, Engineering, Electrical Trade Union

Frances Lenihan, TEEU and Women's Committee. I wish to propose this amendment on Motion 4 on Equality. As any successful work life balance economy will only be achieved if childcare responsibilities are shared by men as well as women. We all know this will not happen unless there is a serious move towards paid maternity leave. That is why we are proposing to add the following: Increased annual leave, a greater number of public holidays in line with best practice in Europe, the introduction of paid parental leave and two weeks paid paternity leave and the provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities supported by a tax refund scheme for users. Thank you delegates.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much indeed. Is that amendment acceptable to the PSEU? Ok, is it acceptable to Conference? Ok, can I call a vote then on the motion as amended, all those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Can I call then on Seamus to move Motion 5 please.

Seamus Dooley, National Union Of Journalists

Seamus Dooley, moving Motion 5 on behalf of the Executive Council. The 2006 census results are a useful starting point in illustrating the need for immediate action. In total there are 121,800 family units consisting of co-habiting couples in 2006 up from 77,600 four years earlier. Co-habiting couples accounted for 11.6 per cent of family units in the 2006 census. The number of children living with co-habiting parents stood at 74,500. The number of same sex co-habiting couples recorded in 2006 was 2,090. Two thirds of these were male couples. The Catholic Church may well have abolished Limbo but in the Republic of Ireland all of these people have been consigned by this state to a constitutional Limbo. We have had a large number of reports and I am not going to detail them for you in the co-habitees, the short Gospel version. Both the Options Paper on domestic partnerships and the Law Reform Commission report on the rights and duties of co-habitees, and that's the short title, provide a framework for legislative reform which extends full rights to co-habitees. Colleagues, we have had enough working parties, we have had enough studies, and we have had enough of guff. What we now need is action and we need it immediately. Article 41 of the Constitution recognises the special position of the family and we are not interested in interfering with the family and they need not interfere with us but what we want to do is ensure that we get equal rights, we are not looking for anything else. And by the way, does anyone really believe that the special place

of women in the constitution has done anything for women in Ireland? Does anyone believe that the Constitution protection has done anything for women or the family in Ireland? In terms of church doctrine as I say we have been confined to Limbo. But the state has not been passive in this. Take one example, the Fianna Fail/PP Government amended the Social Welfare Act, 2004 to limit the national fuel scheme and free travel to limit it to married couples only. That was a deliberate attempt to frustrate the result of an investigation by the Equality Tribunal. The state is not some sort of an innocent procrastinator as the Taoiseach is often portrayed. In this one the state has been hostile. And the recent opportunistic opposition to the Labour Party Bill was a classic example of the state being afraid to take a stand for equality. Sexual orientation must not be the basis of second class citizenship. Delegates, these are not my words. These are the words of the Taoiseach when he opened the offices of Glen in April, 2006. On that occasion Mr Aherne declared 'our laws have changed and will continue to change to reflect this principal'. Colleagues, on behalf of all co-habittees I say to you, President, General Secretary, it is time that we reminded Mr Aherne of that commitment as a commitment to genuine Republican principals and I will leave you with this frightening though, gays and lesbians in Ian Paisley's Northern Ireland now have a greater right in terms of civil liberties than gays and lesbians in the South. You are better off in Ballymena than Bundoran.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

After the weather this week I'm not sure if you are always better off in Ballymena than Bundoran. Can I get the motion seconded please, OK. Can I call a vote on Motion 5, all those in favour, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. Motion 6 then in the name of the ASTI.

Diarmuid de Paor, Association of Secondary School Teachers

Diarmuid de Paor, ASTI. Delegates this motion concerns a statutory provision which undermines the fairness and diversity which is promoted both by the European Year of Equal Opportunities and indeed by the theme of this Conference. Section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act reads as follows: A religious, education or medial institution which is under the direction or control of a body established for religious purposes, in other words most of our schools and hospitals, or whose objectives include the provision of services in an environment which follows certain religious values shall not be taken to discriminate against a person. If it gives more favourable treatment on the religion grounds to an employee or prospective employee over that person where it is reasonable to do so in order to maintain the religious ethos of the institution or it takes action which is reasonably necessary to prevent an employee or a prospective employee from undermining the religious ethos of the institution. This clause flows from the presumption or rather the prejudice that people such as teachers might actively seek to undermine the ethos of the school or institutions in which they work and

that additional special protections are needed to immunise the schools from their influence. Our central argument is that such special measures are not necessary. ASTI members for example work in denominational schools across the state system. Gay and lesbian teachers, teachers in what might be called irregular relationships and teachers, and I would say a lot of us are familiar with this, who's belief in their faith and their upbringing has been dented somewhat over the years, deserve the confidence and trust of their employees no less than any other group of employees and do not require special measures or provisions to monitor and regulate their lives. Our members tell us that the existence of this section creates an atmosphere of fear, of silence and dishonesty amongst those who fear its use. While most people don't use the workplace as a window onto their private lives the right to be open about who you are and to celebrate every day aspects of your life should not be taken for granted. And the fact that the clause may not have been used and despite the commitment of our union to combat the unfair use of this clause, it is not enough to dissuade our members' fears. Its very existence of capacity for use in retaining or not retaining temporary teachers for example or selecting persons for promotion. This is an affront not only to our own members but to all workers and indeed the citizens in the Republic. Some of you may be aware of research published 2006 by DCU into homophobic bullying of students in second level schools. 80 per cent of the teachers who responded to that said they were aware of incidents of bullying. But the same survey revealed that teacher's difficulties in dealing with the issue amongst students because of fear of disapproval from their boards, their trustees, from their colleagues, and from other students and we must ask how this Clause 371 is a contributing factor to such a climate of fear where silence and denial is the norm. Delegates we must put an end to this silence and to this denial. I move the motion. Thank you very much indeed. I would also beg the indulgence of the President, since we have been waiting since Tuesday, may the seconder have a minute please.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Seen as you asked so nicely, yes.

Carmel Heneghan, Association of Secondary School Teachers

Mr President, Congress, delegates, Carmel Heneghan, ASTI delegate and member of the Women's ICTU Committee. In seconding this motion I wish to state that many of our members consider this section an unnecessary and excessive protection of denominational rights - an opt out clause in a time equal treatment and in respecting diversity. Now some members saw the clause as a case of great anxiety when trying to secure a permanent post or a promotional post, I think Diarmuid had dealt with that sufficiently. They have been aggrieved that their personal beliefs or their private lifestyles could be used to discriminate against them. People who are capable, conscientious doing their work. They consider it an affront to their capacity to the loyal members of the school and they

claim that it encourages silence and deception about their identity. Of course infers suspicion and it accommodates prejudice. In the view of the ASTI there is adequate scope within existing codes and legislation for any employer to confront and challenge behaviour which conflicts with the wide range of values espoused by a school or by an institution. There is absolutely no need for extra or specific measures. Finally, the motion does not dispute the school's right to its ethos or the values nor does it condone the undermining of these values. It merely asks for consultative process to be set in train with those bodies responsible for the insertion of the clause in the first place. I appeal to you to support the motion and thank you Mr President for allowing me to speak.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, can I put Motion 6 to vote, all those in favour please show, anyone against, any abstentions? That's carried. We move now to the final motion, Motion 7 in the name of the CWU UK.

Eamon Cooke, Communication Workers Union, UK

Ladies and Gentlemen, Eamon Cooke, CWU UK. Conference members with mental health problems are often reluctant to seek support and representation because of stigma that is attached to the possibility of it resulting in discrimination. The DDA defined disability as a physical or mental and permanent and its potential for a long term and personal affect on a person's ability to carry out day to day activities. A former medical diagnosis is not longer always necessary. A mental health problem could range from stress related conditions such as anxiety, compulsive behaviour and depression. The more serious conditions such as bi-polar disorder. More than 13,000 people in the North of Ireland were referred to mental health services by their GPs last year. The number of mental health cases has risen by 13 per cent over the last five years. The North of Ireland has one of the highest suicide rates in Europe. This is clearly linked to mental health problems. Mental health related illness is now common. One in six people will suffer from depression in some point in their lives but it most commonly occurs between the ages of 25 and 44. Each year 91 million days are lost due to mental health problems. The rise in stress related illness has been well documented as has the corresponding rise in employee absence rates. Conference, what can the trade union movement do to improve this worrying trend? We can instigate a campaign amongst the membership against discrimination on the grounds of mental health. This means putting in place health desks, improved visibility of advice and guidelines both for union members and employers. We need to work with the Congress Disability Committee and other relevant bodies to develop an information pact which will highlight the associated problems and more importantly where people can go to seek help. We need to liaise with the TUC who are at present currently developing a training course which is aimed at trade union officials which will provide an insight into how to deal with individual members who are showing

symptoms of stress related illness. This course will not attempt to make them professionals but it will hopefully put in place a fast track process to ensure those who need to get professional help. This year the CWU UK a similar proposition at our own Conference. It's quite simply Conference no longer acceptable to avoid this issue. Our members need the best advice we can direct at them. Please support.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Thanks very much indeed. Seconded. Call the vote, all those in favour, and anyone against, abstentions? That's carried. To deal then with the relevant sections of the Executive Report. Are they approved? Agreed. And I have just in case we missed anything to ask if there is any other issue arising from any other part of the report. If not can I have your approval for adoption of the Executive Report in its entirety. Is that agreed? Agreed. Ok. Before I had over, there is an announcement that the winner of the VHI draw for a hamper worth €250 is Padraig Kenny. Padraig the hamper will be delivered next week. The General Secretary, I think, wants to say a few words before the closing ceremonies.

Closing Ceremonies

David Begg, General Secretary

Thank you President. I really just wanted a minute to take the opportunity as we come to the close of Conference of thanking my colleagues on the staff of Congress for the amount of work which they have done this week. I had the opportunity at the opening of Congress to thank them for the inputs and the work they put in to the report but during the week they have all done exceptional, Trojan work and very often I suppose people in the workplace go along and they don't think or feel that their work is appreciated and I just want to take this opportunity which happens just once every two years to say how much I appreciate what they have done. They won't any of them I think be annoyed if I single out the Conference Organiser, Eileen Sweeney who has lived with this now for the last two years trying to get this Conference together. Just to tell you a small thing to put this in context, some time last week I was getting into the car at work around 7am in the morning and I was putting the phone into the receiver, the hands free thing, and I happen to push the button on her number and I was surprised that she actually answered it and I said what are you doing at work at this hour of the morning so she gave me some cock and bull story about having misread the clock but I mean in fact she was at work at 7 O'Clock in the morning preparing for this. So, Eileen, thank you particularly the effort you put into it.

I want to thank on the governance structure of Conference, the members of the Executive Council and of the General Purposes Committee with whom we have worked during the last two years who have really been exceptional colleagues in every respect. The Officers of Congress particularly, Joe O'Flynn gave a lot of credit the other day to Sally Anne which was well deserved but Joe himself puts in a huge amount of work looking after that crucial governance on your behalf which gives you the assurance that Congress is being properly run in relation to its finances and so on and I thank him very much for that. I want to thank the two outgoing Vice-Presidents, one of whom will be my boss now for the next two years and I look forward very much to working with Patricia and I want to thank Rosheen particularly who is standing down this year for the great work that she has done over many years, an enormous amount of work for example which she does on the pensions issue which people are very well aware of, the fantastic expertise she displays on that.

I want to thank the Standing Orders Committee for the work that they have done and finally, to say to my friend Peter, I did get the opportunity during the week to say a word about him at a private function and I know that a number of people here are going to talk about him now, I will only say that it has been a wonderful experience to work with him as President and we had a rough enough time now the two of us in the last couple of years and I hope that Patricia and myself will

have an easier passage for the next couple of years, but Peter is a wonderful person. He has done a wonderful job for Congress and he has been a wonderful President of Congress and I thank him very much for that. And, thank you colleagues for all your input and your courtesy over the last few days.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Congress President

Ok, thanks for that David. I now move to the closing ceremonies and it is my great honour to hand over Patricia. I didn't understand Patricia when I became President why they didn't have a chain of office but what they have is a burden, so it is my great honour to hand over the Presidency to you and to invite you to take us through the closing ceremony. Thank you.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Incoming President of Congress

Thank very much Peter. I now call on the mover of the vote of thanks to the outgoing President. Thank you Dan.

Dan Murphy, Public Services Executive Union

Hello my friend. Thanks very much Madam President, being called that for the first time. First of all chair I think I would like to express our appreciation on behalf of everybody for the weather that he has now brought us as we are now leaving. Perhaps we shouldn't dwell too deeply on the weather, deep being very appropriate really, on the weather we have had for the last few days. But, still he has promised us good weather, he didn't tell us it would only happen just as the thing was finishing but anyway.

I would like to thank you Peter for your chairing of this Conference which was efficient, effective and all those other words that we use in public service modernisation documents, and a credit to you and your union and to everything you stand for. In saying that Chair, I think it is also perhaps appropriate to dwell for a couple of minutes. I am not going to go over Peter's life and all his contributions because we would be here for a long, long time and the weather may disimprove again. But I think there are a few things to say. First of all Peter's contribution in the negotiation of *Towards 2016* was quite remarkable. As one of the people who was present throughout the feat, and I tell you it was some feat, and it went on for a long time, I think that were it not for Peter's contribution, Peter's patience, Peter's persistence and all those other qualities that he has, I do not believe that we would have come out the far end of the negotiations with an actual settlement. I mean I don't know if people really appreciate just how much time and effort went in to the negotiation of *Towards 2016* and Peter led us through that I think with flying colours. But there was also the lead up to *Towards 2016* and the things that have happened since *Towards 2016*. And again Peter has been to the fore of all of those. I will just mention a few things. The Post Office dispute, the Irish Ferries problem, and the recent nurses dispute and Peter

engaged with each of those deeply and continuously with colleagues, obviously such as Dave, with a view to getting to a solution and succeeded on each of them and these were very difficult problems in getting to a solution and again I am not at all sure Chair, that there are that many other people in this movement who would have been able to show the patience and persistence to bring us through to a solution of those problems. And each of them was in their own right A major difficult issues.

Peter's commitment to Social Partnership, which of course imbued him I suppose in terms of the *Towards 2016* negotiations and also some of the other things I have mentioned, Peter's commitment to Social Partnership is in awe, as Peter is one of these people in this movement who can look beyond the immediate to a longer term goal to what I describe sometimes as the prize. And the prize is the influence and significance the trade union movement can have in this country and can have in this country through the Social Partnership process. And his awareness of the importance of maintaining that at all times. The other thing obviously in that respect is that Peter in terms of his presidency, when his own union had in mind having a rather big shindig to celebrate his presidency, again had the foresight and wisdom to say, look a big shindig would be a grand thing and we would all enjoy it but we would all have forgotten about it in a couple of days afterwards whereas the book he has succeeded in putting together and produced will be a lasting memorial not just to his presidency but to the activity of the trade union movement in the last twenty years in this country. And the significant role that the trade union movement has played in the life of this country. And, again I think it is a classical example of the breath of vision that Peter has that, as I say instead of having some old shindig where we would all maybe have a few jars and bit of a laugh as I suppose we have had here during the past week, this will be a lasting memorial to Social Partnership, not that I am suggesting that it is dying or anything like that.

As regards Social Partnership in fact Chair, I was sitting down there during the week and I'm afraid that instead of attending the detail of the discussions that were going on in the various motions that were being discussed, important though they were, I picked up a little book which was produced by the Cuban embassy and you mightn't all think that I would be a man that would be reading things produced by the Cuban embassy, but I went through it and I was concerned as to what the view of the Cubans would be on Social Partnership. And, I came across a couple of paragraphs under the heading of 'Relationship of the Unions to the Communist Party and Government'. Now this was in the immediate aftermath of the contribution by a man described by Kevin Duffy, as the delegate from Drumcondra, and it says 'fundamental to the Cuban socialist system is the concept of collective social goal, workers are the direct beneficiaries of economic development. Both management and labour are equally committed to the same objective – a more efficient, productive economy', and so on. Now you would have to make a few changes with some of the titles, the names of parties and things like that, but fundamentally it struck me that

perhaps Peter we should bring this to the attention of the man in charge of the country because it seems to me that there is a lot here that would be useful to him in the development of the Social Partnership process. But you can all read it for yourselves, it is there on the table, free.

The other thing that struck me about Social Partnership during the week Chair is that I had a discussion, well I actually listened to a harangue really from delegate of a union whose name I won't mention, who told me that and clearly this delegate hadn't read this document because there is a certain closeness it seems between the Government and unions in this particular country, she told me anyway that we were far too close to the Government in this country and that what we needed to do was to outwit Bertie Aherne. Now I said to here I thought we would want to get up kind of early in the morning to do that. And she said no, she was quite serious on the point and persistent. So, it concurred to met that seeing that I was going to have the opportunity of moving the vote of thanks to our President, that I would bring this request to him so that he could devote his mind to it over the next couple of days so that when we get back to Dublin on Monday, he will be in a position to carry out the wishes of this particular delegate and I am no sure that if anyone could do it must be Peter and if he can't I think we might as well stay in bed in the morning.

I could go on Chair about Peter's contribution to the Public Services Committee but that can be a sensitive subject in place like this because people here could get a bit cross talking about the Public Services Committee so maybe I better leave it alone. Other than again Chair to move on behalf of the Conference a vote of heartfelt thanks to Peter for its chairing of this Conference, for his work over the past four years on behalf of the trade union movement, I move.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Incoming President of Congress

Thank you Dan. Can I now call on Jack O'Connor to second the motion of thanks.

Jack O'Connor, SIPTU & Vice President

President and delegates, I have to say that I Jack O'Connor, SIPTU seconding the vote of thanks to the outgoing President, I have to say delegates, that I hesitated somewhat this morning when I was invited to second this vote of thanks and that's in no sense a reflection of any loss of regard for you Peter, but I hesitated by reason of the fact that I was presented with a conundrum as to how I would manage to accurately reflect the achievements of your tenure of office without raising the bar for myself and the President to an unnecessary degree. But I hesitated further I have to say when I sat there listening to Dan Murphy's comments in relation to Cuba and I noticed a bag ominously tucked in here under the podium and I was hopeful that it was for him rather than for me. And for the same reason I won't delay you too long here.

I think it is important that we would reflect on the fact that your tenure of officer Peter, both as Vice President and subsequently as President was served during an unique period in the history of our movement because if we think about it, it was the period during which the peace process as it has become known on this island inched its precarious way along the precipice of history to the point where we could experience what we experienced here last Wednesday when the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland became the first Minister of an administration in Northern Ireland to address a Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. And over that entire period Peter, you had to discharge the role of the most senior Officer of the one institution on this island which had managed to transcend thirty years or more of sectarian strife and you had to discharge that in a manner which was complementary with the task which history had tasked our movement. And simultaneously your period in office transcended the period during which we experienced the most remarkable ratcheting up of the consequences of globalisation for working people in this island when the Government of the Republic cynically decided without consulting our Congress to open the borders to the accession countries on the 1 May, 2004, thus delivering tens of thousands vulnerable migrant workers to the tender mercies of the Irish employer class. And you had to preside over the affairs of our Congress which didn't receive the same degree of attention and you had, as Dan Murphy has pointed out, to steer us through one of the most complex and difficult negotiations our movement has ever had to conduct with our Government and the employers through what subsequently became known as the T 2016 negotiation. And it is worth remembering, delegates, that was a different negotiation in a variety of ways from much of what been experienced previously in this respect. That our agenda going in there was to reign in to some limited

degree the extent of the freedom, if you use that term, achieved by the employers on the nod with that decision to open the borders without introducing complementary enhancement of our labour regulation and enforcement system. And is so far as that aspect of the negotiations is concerned I think it is true to say that both parties with diametrically opposing objectives and you led us sure footedly through six torturous months of negotiation, displaying intelligence, patience and persistence with all side and I am sure that on more than one occasion, although I doubt that you will ever be prepared to admit it Peter with myself, to the result which if we can bring it home and we are a bit from bringing it home yet in the sense that we still have to translate commitments enshrined in an agreement into practical legislative measures, but to a result which would represent some significant progress in the development of our labour regulation and enforcement mechanisms in this country to the enhancement of the interests and the quality of life of tens of thousands of working people. And as Dan pointed out, you also had to apply equal intelligence, sure footedness, persistence, and patience in the manner along with the General Secretary, you rendered assistance to our colleague and friends in the Communication Workers Union and those in the nursing profession in the recent disputes. And I think one of the most remarkable aspects of all of that is that you gave so generously of your time and your energy in disputes which wouldn't have been perceived as immediately affecting the membership of your own union but you clearly had the foresight not only to discharge your obligations in accordance with the principles of solidarity but in recognition of the reality that those threats would be approaching workplaces near the members of your organisation pretty soon as well.

And I want before I finish to mark what I think ultimately, potentially, may represent your finest achievement and that is the way in which you pioneered the initiative on trade union organisation which was discussed here on Tuesday evening. As I pointed out in the debate on Tuesday evening, my union has very many reservations about that initiative, particularly in relation to its limitations but it is none the less the first practical recognition of the necessity of what we have to do if we are to discharge our obligations in accordance which the task that history has set us to working people and their families on this island.

It was a great pleasure Peter to work with you. I learnt myself an enormous amount from working alongside you. Some of the lessons I learnt I will never be able to put in to practice because I could never get as close to the administration in the Republic as you seem to be able to get to and I don't believe they would ever allow me to so close either. But nonetheless, we were able finally to observe the manner in which you conducted this historic Conference of the Congress of Trade Unions with equanimity and fairness and affording due consideration to every delegate at this Conference, and I know from discussions I have had with you over the last two or three years, the clear understanding you have of the way in which the delegates to this Conference and those who participate at the Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, reflect the interests of

those tens of thousands of working people who are organised in unions in this country. I mentioned the fear I had of raising the bar in any remarks I might make. The fact of the matter is that nothing I said has raised the bar. It is the way in which you have discharged the responsibilities of your office with such credit and such distinction that has indeed raised the bar. And I am not at all going to suggest that I would ever be able to equal it except in one respect. And, I give this guarantee to you all delegates and it is this – that I guarantee you that the weather enjoyed by those who attend Conference 2011 will be at least as good as that we have enjoyed here. Thank you very much.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON & Incoming President of Congress

Thank you Jack. Conference I call on Peter to respond.

Peter McLoone, IMPACT & Outgoing President of Congress

It is a great comfort sitting there getting a vote of thanks from two bigger rogues than yourself. And when you hear them moaning about a bit of wind and a bit of rain it leaves you worried but they cleverly managed to blame me for T2016 I noticed in their contribution.

I am in the unique position that I am not retiring, I have to go back to work on Monday or maybe Tuesday of next week, President, and I still will be involved in the work of the trade union movement and the Executive of Congress, but I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to hold the presidency of Congress. It really has been an honour and a great privilege.

I was asked by many people during the week how will you feel when it comes to an end? Will you be glad when it's all over and no is the answer, I think emphatically no, but I do have a strong sense of relief not because it's over but relief at the fact that at the end of the two years you do have this feeling of achievement. Again, not at a personal level but what we done together and as both Dan and Jack have said, the role of presidency over these two years have gone in a way that you could never have anticipated but I think that work which we have done together has built, as Jack said, very solid foundations for the future. My experience in the presidency and vice-presidency has supposed deepened my respect for this movement and the people who are part of it. And, they say that friendships grow out strong actions and the friendships I had before I took on this role have deepened and new friendships have formed. And I think, as Jack says, what the trade union movement, what trade unionists have is a strong sense of identification with ordinary working people, their needs, their rights, their entitlements. We may differ collectively on the many or the best ways of pursuing the objectives but fundamentally we are all the same, we are all in the same game.

I just want to acknowledge the support I have received from friends, the few that I have left after these two years both within the trade union movement and outside. I thank the Executive of my own union and the members of IMPACT for supporting me through these last four years and my colleagues the staff have been tremendous. You will appreciate it that it would not be possible to devote this amount of time to Congress activity if you didn't have a very solid supportive team back at the ranch and I hope they will forgive me for signaling out one person who is not here which is Valerie West, my PA, who has been a tremendous. This is Valerie's third President, she was PA to Harold O'Sullivan, Phil Flynn and now myself so it really has been tremendous support she has given.

I want to acknowledge the support I have got from every member of the Executive Council and the GPC and the extended GPC because as has been said, everything that we have done, we have done on a collective basis. And, I want to thank particularly my two VPs, Patricia and Rosheen, they have been fantastic and as has already been acknowledged to the other Officer, Joe O'Flynn because while we were dealing with all these high profile industrial disputes, we decided during this term that we would engage with the organisational problems within Congress and do something about that so the new affiliation fees that were approved here at the private session on Tuesday afternoon are the product of an awful lot of work, an awful lot of consultation in building up support and Joe has done that job of Treasurer with great distinction over the last number of years.

I also want to extend my thanks to Michael and the Standing Orders Committee who almost lost it at the beginning but I thought your performance Michael was superb and certainly very persuasive or sufficiently persuasive.

I want to pay particular thanks and praise to the staff of Congress. Each and every one of you have been a great support, tremendous and I have remarked to the General Secretary that Congress is an organisation that we expect an awful lot of, we expect a lot for something that up to now we have resourced so little and I really do salute you for the tremendous work each and every one of you do on our behalf. Many times its thankless and you may not feel that it is acknowledged sufficiently and appreciated but it genuinely is by all the affiliates. The only person I want to single out for mention is to welcome Natalie to her first Conference. She has been great. And also to David. I said coming in to the office that we were blessed to have David Begg as General Secretary and he is, I think, in my experience the most outstanding trade union official that it has been my privilege to know and to work with.

Finally, can I just acknowledge the support that I have got from family over the last four years now. They were all here earlier during the week but my two grandchildren, Josh and Sean, he is over there in the corner and the two of them have been here so their interest and appetite for the work we do in the trade

union movement that the very young ages of eleven going twelve, and ten going on eleven, so that's a good introduction to the trade union movement. At the back of the hall is Philip Shaw who a member of the TEEU. He is the long suffering partner of daughter, Triona, and you are very welcome and Triona is here, who lives with me in Dublin and I had to pause there because she is waving at me not to say anything but all I can say to you is all my needs.....

Can I congratulate Patricia McKeown. I know you will be an outstanding President. Our trade union movement is in a safe pair of hands and I think it is timely at this stage in what is happening in the North they way that our economy and our society is going to evolve, that you are in charge because I think you will be able to do that work and bring tremendous distinction to the office and I want to wish Jack well. Jack is as usual very modest. I think when the time comes Jack O'Connor will again be one of the really outstanding presidents in this trade union movement. He is a fantastic leader of his union and has been very influential in shifting the direction of the trade union movement to one that now takes a much deeper interests in the things that are fundamentally important to us and I think, you know, that he will bring all those qualities to the office in support of Patricia.

A final reflection is that I said it at the IMPACT gig the other night that Congress is really an extension of work that we do as trade union and I think the way in which we got to evolve going forward is to stop talking to and about Congress as if it was something that was removed from the work that we do. And I think we should think of Congress as we rather than they because how successful Congress is going to be going forward I think is completely down to how much we recognise that by acting together, by acting collectively, we will do a much, much better job on behalf of the people we represent.

I am going to wind up by inviting Sally Anne to make two presentations, first to Patricia and second to Rosheen and I want to finish on this note. This is Rosheen's last Conference but again, not one of these high profile people, but has done tremendous work on pensions, on equality, a great campaigner, advocate on our behalf and the work you have done and the contribution you have made to the trade union movement, Rosheen, it is very, very much appreciated and this is just a small token.

Ok, Madam President, for the second time over to you to close the Conference and thank you all very, very much. It's a great way to disappear against a set of flowers!

Patricia McKeown, Unison & Incoming President of Congress

Conference before we close I want to add my personal thanks to Peter for the tremendous dedication and extraordinary achievements over the last two years as President. I know it goes much, much beyond that but he already has raised

the bar and I know what an extraordinary honour it is to be the President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. As the week has gone on it has increasingly occurred to me what an extraordinary responsibility it is too and if I can in any small way meet some of the standards that Peter set for us all over the last two years, then I hope I will do a good job on your behalf.

I do now that for a very long time inside our Congress even though we very proudly cover the whole island, the truth of the matter is that we have very much grown up in two different worlds with different sets of responsibilities inside the movement and sometimes that hasn't squared at things like the Biennial Conference. I do know we witnessed history this week. I do know that the peace settlement in the North means something particularly unique for the whole island and it does mean something in the way we will do our business in the future. We still have much to learn about each other and the pressures in the two different jurisdictions but three quarters of everything we have talked about we share and I do think that over the last week we have done extraordinary business on an agenda that has ranged from the need to look at ourselves and organise workers in to unions to protecting the rights of the people we represent and their communities to global and international issues of solidarity and for me that is always the way the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has behaved. I think our movement is regarded on an international basis with the highest of respects, and I do think that the Irish Congress has always punched above its weight both on the domestic and the international front, and I think we can continue to do that.

I really do look forward to working with David and the whole team. I want to thank my colleagues on the outgoing Executive and congratulate my colleagues on the incoming Executive. I look very much forward to working with Jack and Patricia. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Rosheen. Jack and I have talked over the last number of months about the kind of challenges this movement still faces. You have confirmed this week in your motions and in the level of debate that those indeed are the issues that confront Irish workers and occupy our members and we are going to try our best to do something about that. It won't be easy. I had my blood pressure taken with the Trust outside Eric and my picture taken with them for publicity reasons but I think on the blood pressure readings I shouldn't be standing here. But that is how important I consider this to be, Conference. We all by the way belong to the elite set in ICTU and that is the Biennial Conference Friday morning attendees and I mean to say, that every time a Congress starts, to the potential absentees you want to stay for the Friday morning because some of the best motions and best debates take place. Look what they missed. They have missed extraordinary things today but nevertheless it has been a well attended Congress and I do believe that in the course of this week I know we are going to be alright for two reasons; one I think and you spotted them too, a number of young people came up to this rostrum who are the leaders of our movement in the future and I thank them for that. And we are going to be alright because we have shown how we can adapt and change, and modernise. Two years ago in Belfast we talked about the need to get migrant

workers organised into this movement, two years later migrant workers are part of us up here talking for themselves.

And, finally, I know we have a future when Dan Murphy stands up and advocates the Cuban model and everything is going to be alright. Thank you colleagues, comrades, delegates and thank you everybody at the top table. Have a safe journey home and see you in Belfast in 2009.

Close of Conference

STANDING ORDER REPORTS

Standing Orders Committee Report Number One

**Tuesday 3rd July 2007 –
Morning Session**

Times of Sessions

1. Conference sessions will commence at 09.30 hours each day from Tuesday 3rd July to Friday 6th July. Conference will adjourn for lunch at 13.00 hours each day Tuesday to Friday and will resume at 14.30 hours each day except Wednesday 4th July and Friday 6th July.

The Election of Officers and Ordinary Members of the Congress Executive Council, the Congress Standing Orders Committee and the Congress Appeals Board

2. The Standing Orders Committee notes that Congress has received nominations for the Officer positions as follows. One nomination has been received for the position of President and Patricia McKeown is therefore deemed elected. One nomination has been received for the position of Treasurer and Joe O'Flynn is therefore deemed elected.

3. Three persons have been nominated for the two Vice-President positions. It is noted that the Congress Constitution requires that at least one Vice-President be a woman. Since only one woman has been nominated as a Vice-President, Patricia King is deemed elected. An election, using the single transferable vote system, will be held between the two other candidates for the remaining Vice-President position.

4. The Standing Orders Committee notes that one of the candidates nominated for the position of Vice-President is also a candidate for election as an ordinary member of the Congress Executive Council. If that person is elected Vice-President they cannot also be a continuing candidate in the election for the ordinary members of the Congress Executive Council. Therefore in the event that the person in question is elected as Vice-President any ballot paper which shows a preference marked for the person elected as Vice-President will be ignored and the next preference shown on the ballot paper will be the operative preference for purposes of the election of ordinary members of the Congress Executive Council. Thus, for example, in the case of a ballot paper which shows a No.1 Preference for a person elected as Vice-President, a candidate on that ballot paper who is shown as receiving a No.2 preference will be deemed to have received a No.1 preference and similarly for lower preferences. It will be necessary therefore for the scrutineers to count the ballot for Vice-President first

and in light of that result proceed to the election of the 30 ordinary members of the Congress Executive Council.

5. The election of the ordinary members of the Executive Council will be conducted using the single transferable vote system. The Congress Constitution requires that this election must result in the election of at least eight women. In the event that the outcome of the election of the 30 ordinary members of the Executive Council results in less than eight women being elected then the following procedure should apply. The last man to be “elected” amongst the 30 should be replaced by the last woman to be eliminated. In the event that this does not result in eight women being elected then the second last man to be “elected” should be replaced by the second last woman to be eliminated and so on until the minimum requirement of eight women members is met.

6. The Standing Orders Committee notes that Congress has received two nominations for the position on the Congress Executive Council reserved for a person to represent Trades Councils. An election to fill this vacancy will be held using the Single Transferable Vote system.

7. Congress has received seven nominations for election to the Congress Standing Orders Committee. An election to select the five members of the Standing Orders Committee and the two substitutes will be conducted using the Single Transferable Vote system.

8. Congress invited nominations for five members of the Congress Appeals Board. At the closing date only three nominations had been received and therefore, Gerry Light, Denis Keatings and Cora Martin are deemed elected. The filling of the two remaining vacancies will be a matter to be decided by the incoming Executive Council.

Ballot Papers

9. The arrangements for the exchange of credential stubs and the issuing of voting cards and ballot papers will be as follows: |

- Credential stubs will be exchanged for voting cards during the conference proceedings on the
- Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning. Each delegate must personally exchange his or her
- Credential stub for a voting card.
- Ballot papers for the election of a Congress Vice President, Congress Executive Council Members and the Congress Standing Orders Committee will be issued from 9.30 hours to 12.30 hours on
- Thursday 5th July 2007.

- Each union will be asked to nominate a principal delegate who, in exchange for the voting cards, will collect the ballot papers from a Polling Station away from the main conference hall.
- On completion, ballot papers should be returned to the sealed ballot boxes in the Polling Station by the individual delegates or by the principal delegate in accordance with union practice, before 13.00 hours on Thursday 5th July 2007.

Motions and Amendments

10. The Standing Orders Committee has examined the motions on the preliminary agenda and the amendments submitted by affiliated organisations.

11. At the request of the Executive Council the Standing Orders Committee have where possible and with the agreement of the affiliated organisations concerned attempted to composite motions where the motions submitted were of a broadly similar theme or had similar objectives. The final agenda contains 3 composite motions and these motions will be taken as per the timetable set out in the final agenda for conference. Standing Orders Recommends that each of the sponsoring organisations in whose name the composite motion stands be afforded the same speaking rights as the proposer of a normal motion before conference.

12. The Standing Orders Committee rules that Motion No.27 on Conditions of Service submitted by the TUI is out of order in that decisions in relation to National Agreements are taken by Special Delegate Conferences attended by delegates from trade unions in the Republic in Ireland only in accordance with 1.2 of Standing Orders.

13. The Standing Orders Committee rules that all the remaining Motions and Amendments on the Final Agenda are in order.

Suspension of Standing Orders

14. In the interest of orderly and effective conduct of business, the Standing Orders Committee draws the attention of affiliated organisations to the provisions of paragraph 12 of Standing Orders. "A motion to suspend Standing Orders must be submitted in writing to the Chairperson by the proposer and seconder who are delegates to conference. It must specify the Standing Orders to be suspended and the period of suspension. It must state reasons of urgency and importance, and if the suspension is sought for the purpose of giving consideration to a matter not on the Agenda, the reason for not submitting such matter by way of Motion in accordance with Standing Orders. A Motion to suspend Standing Orders may not be adopted except (a) with the permission of the Chairperson

and (b) with the consent of two thirds of the delegates voting on the Motion. The Chairperson, before giving his/her ruling, may at his/her discretion consult with the Standing Orders Committee.

Conference Sessions

15. Time periods have been allocated for specific topics in the appropriate section of the Executive Council Report. Related motions will be taken during these time periods. If there is time left over after the completion of the specified business, Conference will proceed to deal with other business. The Sections of the Executive Council Report and the motions on the Final Agenda will be taken at the time given in the Timetable of Business. Motions have been grouped and votes on the Motions will be taken as indicated in the Timetable of Business.

Fraternal Addresses

16. Fraternal addresses will be given by the following: Mr. Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress. Brendan will address conference on the 3rd or 4th July 2007 during the morning session of Conference.

Mr. John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation. John will address conference on Tuesday 3rd July 2007 during the morning session of conference.

Mr Grahame Smith, General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Grahame will address conference on 3rd or 4th July 2007 during the afternoon session of conference.

Ms Felicity Williams, General Secretary of the Wales Trades Union Congress. Felicity will address conference on Thursday 4th July 2007 during the morning session of conference.

Guest Speakers

17. The Executive Council has invited speakers from the Congress Networks Centres, from the Congress Retired Workers Committee, from the Congress Women's Committee, the Congress Disability Committee and the Congress Youth Committee to address conference. The times at which the guest speakers will address conference will be given in Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2.

Standing Orders Committee Report Number Two

Elections

1. Since the Standing Orders Committee agreed their first report Congress has been informed,
 - by NIPSA that Amanda Allaway would no longer be a delegate to conference and therefore could not continue as a candidate in the election to the Congress Executive Council,
 - by CWU UK that the nomination of David Bell for election to the Congress Executive Council is withdrawn.

As a result of this there are only 30 candidates remaining for 30 vacant positions on the Congress Executive. Therefore there is no requirement for an election on this occasion and the remaining 30 candidates are deemed elected.

The election of a Congress Vice President, a person to represent Trades Councils on the Congress Executive Council and the Congress Standing Orders Committee will be conducted in line with the arrangements set out in Standing Orders Committee Report Number One.

Guests and Fraternal Addresses

2. In addition to the fraternal addresses listed in paragraph 16 of Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1, other guests will be invited to address Conference on the following days and times (these arrangements are provisional and may be subject to change),

Billy Mulherne – Chairperson Bundoran UDC, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

P.J. Hannon – Letterkenny Trades Council, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

Hugh McConville – Sligo Trades Council, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

Paul McLoone – Destination North West, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

Niall Crowley – Chairperson European Year of Equal Opportunities for All Ireland and Chief Executive of The Equality Authority, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

Rhonda Donaghy – Congress Women's Committee, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

Berni McCrea – Congress Disability Committee, Tuesday 3rd July morning session,

Elaine Harvey – Congress Centres Network, Tuesday 3rd July afternoon session,

Peter Sands – Congress Retired Workers Committee- Wednesday 4th July morning session,

Eddie Matthews – Congress Youth Committee – Thursday 5th July morning session,

During the afternoon session of conference on Thursday 5th July 2007 a Question and Answer session on the future direction of health services will take place. The panel will be made up of **Michael Scanlan**, Secretary General of the Department of Health and Children, **Vincent Sheridan**, Chief Executive of VHI Healthcare, **Miriam Wiley**, ESRI Research Professor and **Fergus O'Farrell**, Director of the Adelaide Society. This session will be chaired by **Mary Rafferty** who is a Columnist with the Irish Times.

Address by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD

3. An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD has accepted the invitation of Congress to address conference. An Taoiseach has indicated that he is available to address conference at 10am on Wednesday 4th July. Standing Orders is therefore recommending that conference commence at 9.45am on Wednesday morning 4th July with An Taoiseach's address.

Appointment of Delegates

4. Standing Orders Committee has examined the list of delegates appointed by affiliated organisations and confirms that they are in order.
5. The names of delegates appointed by affiliated organisations may be inspected at the Congress Office in the Conference Centre. A list of late and substitute delegates may also be inspected.

Display Stands

6. The following organisations/projects have been granted permission to have display stands in the Conference Centre. The Construction Workers Health Trust, FAS, Personal Injuries Assessment Board, The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, The Safety Representative Project, Rascal Films, The Irish Labour History Society, HSF Health Plan, The Dublin Employment Pact, The Labour Relations Agency, VHI Healthcare, The European Commission, Irish Aid,

Skillnets, The Pensions Board, The National Employment Rights Authority, The Equality Authority, Fairtrade and The Lift Project.