

**BIENNIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE
WATERFRONT HALL BELFAST**

June 21- 24, 2005

Tuesday 21 June - Morning Session

Opening of Conference

9.30 – 11.30

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

The facility itself (The Waterfront) is owned by Belfast City Council for and on behalf of the citizens of Belfast, and I think as a facility it is one that we think should be a model for all public authorities to have for their people. So on your behalf as President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, I would like to call on the Lord Mayor, the Right Honourable Councillor Wallace Browne to speak to Conference.

Right Honourable Councillor Wallace Browne, Lord Mayor of Belfast

Mr. President, Secretary of State, Delegates, thank you for inviting me to open your Conference this morning. I am very proud as the newly elected Lord Mayor of this city to extend a very warm welcome on behalf of the people of Belfast to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. For those of you who may be visiting Belfast for the first time, I give you a very special welcome. Belfast has a very proud history as a major industrial and trade union centre, but it also has been a divided city, and unfortunately that division has at times entered the workplace with tragic consequences, marring the growth of organised labour in one of Ireland's oldest trade union centres. Our history has taught us some very hard lessons. For many years our troubles festered in the vacuum of economic stagnation and it is only in more recent years that things have been changing. The work which was carried out by the trade union movement in Northern Ireland to reduce sectarianism and intimidation in the workplace, I believe deserves special mention. This morning I want to recognise the very significant work which the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has done in promoting a neutral working environment where everyone can work without intimidation or fear of intimidation. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many trade unionists that stood firm during very difficult times against sectarianism, and today the

trade union movement still has a significant role to play in the social and economic development of this city.

The working world has of course changed immeasurably over recent years and will continue to do so. The way we work has changed without doubt. The way we protect our workforce must also change, to be in a strong position, not just to welcome that change, but to manage it, is something I believe we all have to give much time and creative thought to. It is a new industrial revolution. Because of the way communications have changed it is happening at an astonishing speed. There is little time for deliberation, yet our response needs to be assured and imaginative. Seen through one set of eyes, we have new problems to deal with. Seen through other eyes we have endless new possibilities. It is against this landscape that organisations need to adapt to a rapidly changing environment which is driven by technology and rising customer expectations. Achieving and retaining high performance means we have to be more innovative and effective, not only in meeting customer's needs, but also in managing our employees. In today's fast-changing economy, employees need support to deal with the realities of modern life so they can cope successfully with the challenges of combining work and family.

I was particularly interested to note that your overall theme of this Conference is "Quality Work = Quality Life". Belfast City Council is the largest of the 26 Local Authorities and wants to be an employer of choice and to this end it must remain focussed and committed to innovative and best HR practices. Initiatives such as its Home Working Pilot Scheme, its approach to Work Life Balance, the move to online recruitment, competency-based recruitment and development, all show that the Council embraces such issues to deliver its business goals. I am pleased to say that the Council has developed a very good working relationship with the Northern Ireland Committee, which is a key player in the partnership we have set up to deliver an exciting new project called WINS. Just over 38% of the Council's workforce is female, nearly 10% more than in 1990. The WINS project, which stands for Women in Non-traditional Sectors aims to increase the number of women working in non-traditional jobs within the Council and its partner organisations through a programme of training and work experience. In particular Ann Hope and Ursula O'Hare from Congress have been a great source of advice and support for the project and we are looking forward to continuing this work as the project develops over the next two years.

Belfast is in need of a great cultural diversity and we are grateful that our economy has now become attractive enough to draw people from around the world. This is something to celebrate. International workers provide essential skills and knowledge in much needed areas, but on a social level they also provide a richness and variety of different cultures and traditions to this city. This diversity is to be welcomed. The Belfast you see today is a city of distinction offering a wealth of opportunities to people from all backgrounds, both local and visitors. The city is also known for having a warmth and friendliness, it continues

to attract tourists and delegates from all over the world, and your presence in the city is evidence of this.

In recent years Belfast has earned a reputation for the right reasons. This is a compact city offering a wealth of places to eat and drink, theatres, night life, tourist attractions and shopping. It is also rich in culture with excellent museums and galleries, and combines the excellence of its Victorian architectural heritage with the very best of contemporary design. I am confident that you will enjoy the Belfast experience during your week at this Conference.

In conclusion, I wish to commend you all on the work you have done for us all, the voice of organised labour must be heard loudly if we are to build a new and agreed society. By continuing to work together as social partners we can guarantee the most fundamental of rights; the right to life and the right to work. In closing, may I reiterate a very warm and sincere welcome to Belfast. I wish you well with your Conference and hope that it is both successful and rewarding and that you have the opportunity to forge stronger links with your partners so that you may continue to deliver vital services to those people most in need. Thank you very much indeed.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Lord Mayor for your contribution. What you have said is I think of benefit to us all and I think when you listen to the Lord Mayor you realise that he didn't say anything about his own commitment to the trade union movement, and the fact is that he has been a lifelong member of the NASUWT. So thank you Lord Mayor.

Can I now call on the General Secretary to introduce the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain.

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

Lord Mayor, President, Colleagues. For reasons which I will explain, it is a real personal pleasure for me to have the opportunity of introducing the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is a man who has had what I think could reasonably have been described as a meteoric rise in the political system since he was first elected to the constituency of Neath in 1991. Since then he has been a Foreign Office Minister, Minister for Europe, he has been Leader of the House and now Northern Ireland Secretary, I think by common agreement one of the most difficult jobs in politics today. But it's hard to think of anybody who is better qualified for this job because he has a long track record and experience in conflict resolution in Africa. His record on human rights I think is not matched by

anybody. I think those of us who are of a certain vintage will remember his work in the struggle against Apartheid and the high personal cost to himself in pursuing that struggle which earned great admiration amongst everybody who shared that common objective with him.

I had the pleasure of being a colleague of Peter's at one stage in my career when he worked with the CWU in the UK and I was working with the CWU in Ireland, and our paths crossed again some years later in Nairobi when he was working on peace resolution in the Great Lakes area of the country as a Foreign Office Minister and I was working with Concern. I must say I have always admired everything he has done.

I suppose Peter I would just say to you that our concern here in Northern Ireland is to try to build a better society. The Lord Mayor has correctly said that great progress has been made in recent years, but there is much more to do. Northern Ireland is the fastest growing region in the UK but it is one of the least prosperous regions, and it is bedevilled by low participation rates in the economy and low pay, and it is important that policy decisions that are taken in the area of public sector pay should not exacerbate this problem in terms of disconnecting the pay determination system here from that of the UK in general. But we want to work with you and we would like to build on the memorandum of understanding which was recently worked out with your predecessor and hope that we can build our relationship into a real partnership. But I want to assure you of our very best wishes for your time as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in this very challenging job and to assure you that whatever difficulties you may encounter you will be assured of a very warm welcome from your trade union colleagues. Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, it's my pleasure to introduce the Right Honourable Peter Hain MP, the Secretary of State.

Keynote Speech Peter Hain MP, Secretary of State

Thank you very much David and thank you and good morning to everybody, and thank you for inviting me along this morning for my first public speech as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I think it's appropriate that I'm giving it here, to yourselves. David, we've gone back many years as you say, and I've always seen you as an inspiring trade union leader and I'm sure that all in the Conference agree with me on that. I was delighted to hear the speech of welcome from the Lord Mayor, and also to be sitting alongside your President Brendan Mackin, from Belfast of course and it's very good to see your Congress, your Biennial Conference back here in Belfast, and I hope you'll be back sooner rather than later in this great city. Also good to see Patricia McKeown on the platform as Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee. We had a good discussion at few weeks ago. I know as a UNISON leader Patricia you will remember that one of the constituent unions which formed UNISON was NUPE and NUPE had

campaigns for over 50 years to realise Keir Hardie's dream, first projected over 100 years ago, for a national minimum wage and our Labour government has implemented that, and I'm proud of that. Having worked for 14 years as a Research Officer for the old Post Office workers, now the Communication Workers Union, I believe in the vital role of trade unions. A force for human rights, a force for equality, trade unionism holds the torch of liberty and justice worldwide. Find an anti-trade union government and you will find a reactionary or oppressive government.

I was brought up in South Africa as David mentioned. My parents were jailed then banned and denied a livelihood like Nelson Mandela and so many courageous thousands of others. And having afterwards to become a leader in the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, I want to take this opportunity of thanking Irish trade unionists North and South for the solidarity you gave in those grim days of the Apartheid tyranny. Your solidarity helped win freedom for Black South Africans just as trade union action has helped win freedom for so many millions the world over. As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland I am proud to say that I am a trade unionist too, and I have been all my adult life. I remember one incident when, as a wage negotiator, my job was to do the work on the figures and we reached a particular crisis in the negotiations, and the National Officer alongside me from the old Post Office Workers Union, some of you may remember him Maurice Stiles, used me to do all the serious figure work with my calculator. We got to the difficult stage and the management were ashen-faced at a new offer that they had just made, and there was a nervous tension which all of you who have negotiated agreements will know, and Maurice paused, looked into his briefcase, pulled out a calculator, I'd never seen him operate a calculator before – that was my job – he tapped away on it, looked at it and then said to the management “this is an absolutely outrageous offer” and they walked away flabbergasted because they thought it was the final moment. As they closed the door I said to him “what was all that about I've never seen you operate a calculator”. “Don't worry” he said and he showed it to me. It didn't work. “I got it from a Communist Party jumble sale” he said. So I've been there myself, as I know all you have.

A week into my appointment as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the Creggan area of Derry I came across Paul Grace, a former postman and one of my old union bosses. A contradiction in terms that, union boss, but he was. “Do your best Peter” he said, “the people want peace, equality and self-government.” Today I pledge myself to those objectives, democratic shared government for Northern Ireland, and an end to paramilitary activity and criminality. I want to acknowledge the vital role played by the trade union movement, all of you North and South, during the decades of violence in Northern Ireland. Your leadership, your values, your mobilisation against violence and intolerance helped to keep the candle of democracy and solidarity flickering in very dark times. You played a huge role in progressing the conditions for political engagement and negotiation. You continue to champion the needs of the vulnerable and from

your presence here today I sense you are prepared for the formidable challenges ahead - not least the creation of economic opportunity and prosperity for all the diverse communities of Ireland North and South. The essential backdrop for economic growth and social justice is lasting political stability.

During that first visit to Derry I met community groups from both traditions, in both the Creggan and Tullaly. These groups spoke with one voice, perhaps because of rather than despite their historical divisions. Their message was for politicians of whatever colour to get on with it, close the deal, and empower the people of Northern Ireland by putting their future in their own hands. That's my desire, that's their desire, and that's my priority. Intensive negotiations and discussions last Autumn brought us to the brink of success just before Christmas. But the trust that is essential for sustaining the political institutions evaporated. It was clear that the transition that would see a permanent end to paramilitary and criminal activity had not yet been made. For that trust to be restored, there must be a clear definitive and permanent end to paramilitary activity and its associated criminality. Words are not enough but they are an important start and I hope people would not underestimate the significance of a credible statement from the IRA following their consultation exercise. A commitment in words needs to be capable of being verified over a period of time so that everyone can see that the commitment is real and lasting. If that happens there is every reason to hope and expect that an inclusive powersharing Executive could be re-established. I am genuinely optimistic about that prospect. In an environment where all political parties were unambiguously committed to the principle of exclusively peaceful and democratic means there would be no reason why devolution should not flourish in Northern Ireland.

But whilst our new ministerial team have an overriding goal of facilitating the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland, we nevertheless are fully committed to do all we can to advance economic growth, social justice and community cohesion in tandem with the efforts on the political process. We strongly believe that elected local politicians are best placed for governance. However, in the absence of devolved government we plan to get on with the job of governing with purpose and with resolve. Because there is a real urgency about a range of matters that need to be tackled and some simply cannot wait. Hospital waiting lists and education funding come to mind. To mothball some of the pressing challenges, and duck tough decisions could seriously jeopardise the capacity of Northern Ireland to generate the necessary wealth and resources to effect sustainable long term growth.

In recent years Northern Ireland has become more peaceful and prosperous and our economic success is not an accident, it's not just come about by chance. It's down to the decisions we have taken as a government, the economic stability and the continuous growth that we have pushed forward, supported by record public spending levels. But we can't be complacent. The world is changing fast. China and India march forward. Engineering wages in China, as I saw for myself

last year on a visit, are just 60p an hour. Last year China had 2.1 million new graduates. This year it will have 2.8 million new university graduates, most of them in science, in technology, in engineering, in IT. The economies of the Pacific Rim are dynamic, competitive and very high growth. For example China is growing by 9%, and India and Indonesia by 6% per annum. This compares to longer-term growth of around 2-3% for most industrialised economies like ours.

Global ecological and economic challenges are increasingly centre-stage. The G8 Summit in a few weeks will influence the context in which the economies of Ireland and the United Kingdom will perform over the next decade and beyond. It's simply inconceivable that Northern Ireland can remain indifferent or respond indecisively to these global forces. The ability to react positively to these global challenges will largely determine the scope to shape a vibrant, competitive, equitable and increasingly self-sustaining Northern Ireland. It is imperative that the Northern Ireland economy continues to improve its competitiveness and move from a position which relies less on low costs to compete, to one based on higher, value-added products and services, innovation, creativity, science and high workforce skills.

The best investment we can make in the future of Northern Ireland is in the education and training of our young people to ensure that they have the best forms of education and vocational training possible, and that adults have access to reskilling and lifelong learning throughout their careers. Skills enhancement of the existing workforce at all levels is the key to economic prosperity. Indeed both parts of Ireland are experiencing a shortage of skilled labour in a number of key sectors. That's why the Department of Employment and Learning is developing an exciting new skills strategy and I'm grateful to Congress for the help you are giving in ensuring we devise a strategy that addresses the need to improve the skills of the current workforce, those entering the workforce, and which will address the employability skills of those not currently in jobs.

We must also tackle together, government and trade unions, the legacy of economic inactivity. While the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are approaching full employment, economic inactivity rates are effectively the hidden unemployed. The Northern Ireland inactivity rate is the highest of all the UK regions at 28%. That's unsustainable. By upgrading skills and reforming the tax and benefit systems we are determined to build on the success of a new deal to enable those trapped on benefits to get jobs. Trade unions have a key partnership role to play here.

Northern Ireland has to improve its competitiveness as a premier place to invest. But government also has a key role to play. The unprecedented levels of investment planned for the island of Ireland over the next 10 years demonstrates that North South cooperation results in practical, mutual benefits for both. As we see to implement the investment strategy for Northern Ireland we will be seeking to deliver around £16 billion of investment in Northern Ireland's infrastructure.

Our aim is to address the infrastructure deficit and radically improve the quality of public service delivery throughout Northern Ireland. But equally we must all be clear, we can only achieve continued levels of investment needed if we press on with the tough decisions on regional rates, and water charges, therefore triggering as a result extra access to borrowing and extra access to public spending.

We also need a healthy private sector to underpin and finance this, but the private sector is significantly underdeveloped in Northern Ireland. Public sector employment accounts for 35.7% of total employment, compared to a 20% average for the UK as a whole and 20.5% in the Republic of Ireland. It follows that in growing the private sector, not so much shrinking the public sector, but growing the private sector, enabling it to compete in the global marketplace is pivotal to wealth creation, continued public record spending, and sustained economic prosperity.

Our task is to exploit greater partnerships between the public and private sectors to create a self-confident, dynamic economy. And that is why our government is driving forward expenditure on the devolved services in Northern Ireland, which will continue to grow over the next 3 years, reaching £9 billion annually by 2008, representing a 20% increase in real terms since 2003, a prodigious rise. Compared to the year just ended, 2004-2005, these plans include a 23% increase on current expenditure on health, an 11% increase on education, and a further 11% increase on roads investment. Significant investment in water and sewerage infrastructure is already taking place and will rise by one third in the current year. It will total some £1100 million over the period 2003-2008, a five year period, representing significant headway in tackling the £3 billion infrastructure investment required in water and sewerage over the 20 years to 2023.

Whilst there is always debate around priorities and government can and should always do more and do better and it's your job to press us to do so, what is indisputable is that the level of investment in public services throughout the UK has been at unprecedented levels since we came to power. It is imperative that Northern Ireland deploys these resources to help create a much more self-reliant economy to which the people of Northern Ireland rightly aspire.

I know that the trade union movement has welcomed the commitment announced by the government in March to end the divisive two-tier workforce throughout our public services. Public expectations for the standards which services should meet are also high and rising all the time, and to help ensure these expectations can continue to be met, a programme of development and reform is underway now in the wider public sector here. I know it's tough, but I equally know it's necessary, otherwise an incoming right-wing government could reverse all we've achieved these past 8 years, and all we are determined to achieve as a Labour Government in these coming 4-5 years.

And as we face the tough decisions that lie ahead, I want to assure you that I and all my ministerial team stand ready to work closely with you to achieve our shared goals of decent, well-funded public services. One of the things I'm most pleased about in our first few weeks in office is the way Angela Smith has created a fresh start in the relationship with the education unions. It will only be through that kind of strong partnership that we will be able to bring our education system back onto the firm financial footing that it needs.

So Brendan, across this whole agenda - competitiveness, investment, skills, reform of our public services, extra public spending, creating new opportunities for all - Northern Ireland cannot stand still or be trapped in a past of conflict and sectarianism. Globalisation demands we press on to create a world class economy and a world class Northern Ireland. It's an ambitious agenda. It's an agenda for everyone, but in particular for the progressive leaders of the trade union movement in Northern Ireland. You helped pave the path towards a more peaceful society. You are now being called upon to consolidate this process by playing your parts in building a world class economy without which we cannot sustain improved living standards in the long-term. Alongside other social partners I want a working partnership with the trade union movement to create the opportunities for the people of Northern Ireland to secure a shared future, a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society, a diverse society firmly based on the achievement of reconciliation, of tolerance, mutual respect, equality of opportunity, social justice, and human rights for all.

My door, as I have said, and that of my ministerial colleagues, is always open to you. In my short period as Secretary of State to date I sense a strong desire throughout Northern Ireland to quicken the pace of change and a determination to achieve significant and lasting economic growth, public investment and development. Governments alone cannot orchestrate a new social and economic order. We can only do so standing together, governments and trade unions with the other social partners. I wish you all the best with your Biennial Conference and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can I thank the Secretary of State for his address and certainly welcome how open he was on what he thought was the way forward. There's one thing is sure, and I'm sure he will agree, we don't agree with everything he has said, and I'm quite sure there are things that we will differ on in the future, but the important thing is that that difference should come in dialogue and the offer for ongoing dialogue. The building up of a memorandum of understanding, I think augurs well for the future relationship, and like the Secretary of State and the Lord Mayor,

and indeed all the delegates in this hall, we all want to see a prosperous, united Northern Ireland around the issues of prosperity and inclusiveness.

Thanks you very much.

The Secretary of State and the Lord Mayor have now got to leave, thank you.

Our next speaker is Kevin Doherty who is the Secretary of Belfast Trades' Council.

Kevin Doherty, Secretary Belfast and District Trades' Union Council

President of Conference, fraternal guests, and visitors, on behalf of the Belfast and District Trade Union Council it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Belfast. In your Conference packs you will find an excellent booklet entitled 'Conference Preview and City Guide'. It is well worth reading. There is a brief history of the trade union movement in the city and information on some very interesting fringe meetings organised for the Conference, which we would encourage you to attend. You will also find details of places of interest, things to see, places to eat.

Belfast City Centre has seen some dramatic changes for the better over the last few years. One place of interest we recommend you visit is the John Hewitt Bar, popular with Belfast trade unionists, artists and other disreputable characters. It is owned by the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre so if you buy a pint there, you're supporting the trade union centre. Trades Council delegates buy a lot of pints there, purely in the interest of the trade union movement of course. By the way the President is the Director of the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, so if you go there he might even buy you a pint.....well maybe not.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Some chance.

Kevin Doherty, Secretary Belfast and District Trades Union Council

Next year we hope there will be a new feature in Belfast City Centre as 2006 is the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, the Belfast Trades Council along with a number of artists, academics and other interested people have come together to have a memorial sited for the 77 people from both communities in Northern Ireland that went to fight with the people of Spain against fascism. We also intend to run a series of events throughout 2006

featuring art exhibitions, plays and education seminars on who these men were and what motivated them to go and fight. We hope you will return to attend some of these events.

With the growth of right-wing extremists across Europe we believe this is a timely and useful project. I raise this because we will of course be looking for support from the trade unions, finance amongst other things.

Conference, a lot has happened in Northern Ireland since the last time that we met in Belfast. The protracted peace process eventually resulted in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, a historic compromise between Nationalism and Unionism which was endorsed by referenda by people of this island, both North and South. The Agreement led to the establishment of a genuine powersharing assembly, which meant that at last people could have a direct say in how they were governed.

Although the Assembly had only limited powers devolved to it, it was still a massive step forward. Trade unions in the wider community had a focus on which to direct their campaign in the interests of working people. Unfortunately at this time the Assembly lies suspended, and we are again at the mercy of direct rule Ministers from the new Labour government who are not accountable to the people they govern.

The path towards normalisation of this society is long and is not in a straight line. The divisions are still deep for some in the North and for them trust takes time to build. While they procrastinate and refuse to accept the new realities of a society wishing to move beyond conflict, the issues which affect our everyday lives; jobs, housing, education, poverty, the health service etc. are not given the urgent attention they deserve.

The trade union movement on this island has a proud record in campaigning for peace and against sectarianism. Now we need to campaign again to have accountable government restored as soon as possible so that we press more effectively for opposition to the new Labour policies that will see a dramatic increase in our already excessive cost of living, and in defence of our public services.

Unfortunately the Secretary of State has left, but I would like to have said to him, as you can see from the motions at this Conference, that the people in Northern Ireland do not want additional water charges, massive hikes in their rates bills, continuing poverty, tuition fees, privatisation and the undermining of the public services and the destruction of the manufacturing industry. We do not want our schools, universities and hospitals struggling to meet the demands for vital public services and having to accept private sector finance for investment. Such easy short-term solutions are only storing up problems for tomorrow. The private financiers are only interested in extracting profit. Peter Hain spoke of the

massive, unprecedented figures for investment, but he didn't state where this finance was coming from – whether it was coming from the private sector, or whether it was coming from public funds. I think we know the answer, what he means by that. Also when he uses the term 'unprecedented' we all know that investment levels have to rise as inflation and figures move on, so you could also most say every year is an unprecedented rise in investment.

At the beginning of this peace process we were promised the peace dividend. Where is it? We demand that proper investment is made available to compensate for years of under-investment in the public services and infrastructure in Northern Ireland. We need programmes to lift people out of poverty and low pay. The current approach of trying to attract foreign investment into Northern Ireland by marketing it as a low wage, low pay economy has failed. We need a strategy focusing on developing a high quality, high skilled work force which can attract high added value jobs at the same time as protecting our existing skills.

Again the Minister mentioned the investment which was taking place in China. He talked about the number of graduates coming out of China. How do you encourage graduates when you ask them to pay £15,000 in tuition fees at the end of their course? That's not the way to build a high skilled workforce and he should take account of that.

Conference, a lesson the Irish trade union movement learned long ago is that sectarianism is a divisive and destructive influence on the social, economic, political and cultural interests of all our people. The policy of emphasising the interests of one section of our community alone only weakens our ability to oppose the undermining of our working and living conditions. It is the same with racism, a feature now more prevalent on both sides of the border. Just as the trade union movement on this island, was and still is to the fore in the struggle against sectarianism, so it now must provide leadership in the drive to combat racism in the fight for the protection of our ethnic minorities and migrant workers.

As the issue of migrant workers has the largest number of motions on the Conference agenda, it is clear that this movement firmly believes that all people who live and work in Ireland have a right to respect both in the workplace and in the community and the politics of hate have no place here. Only through unity of all our people, Catholic, Protestant, dissenter, along with our ethnic minorities can we achieve a better life for all.

Looking through the Conference agenda there are some other excellent motions before this Conference. Motions on education, health, childcare provisions, wealth, free distribution, and pensions indicate that there is a clear and pressing need to capture some of the wealth generated from the success of the Irish economy, and redirect it into social well-being. This is essential for a balanced, healthy society.

We note with interest motions opposing privatisation. The experience of privatisation in Britain should be sufficient motivation for Irish trade unions to resist this dogma of private-good, public-bad. The reality is that privatisation is bad for workers and it is bad for customers. It is only good for the elite who cream off the profits.

The motions on the European Union are also very timely and relevant. With the rejections by the peoples of France and Holland of the neo-liberalist agenda enshrined in the Constitution and the resulting crisis for Europe's political elite, is it not time now for our trade union movement to have a proper discussion on the future of the European model? Should we not now be considering what type of Europe we want?

On a point of concern though, there is a severe lack of motions on the manufacturing sector on the agenda. There is clearly a need for consideration of the overall decline in manufacturing, and of how we defend and grow this valuable export-orientated sector.

Conference, the representatives of Belfast Trade Union Council look forward to listening to the speakers and participating in the debates and we wish you a successful Conference and an enjoyable week.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Kevin. I think there were many sentiments contained in what Kevin said that we can all agree with.

Before I move on to the Standing Orders Committee Report Number 1, and call on Kay Garvey, can I just remind delegates, perhaps I am bit remiss, but can you please ensure that your mobile phones are turned off, okay? So mine's off, and I hope it doesn't go off. The alternative is you can put it on vibrate, but I wouldn't advise it at this stage.

The other thing that Kay will be saying is about the time for speakers. Conference, we have 80 motions to go through. You are going to be allocated the time to speak for both moving and seconding, and we want you to, where possible, stick rigidly to that, because if not, the mike will be switched off and you'll be talking to nothing only thin air. So we've got to get through the business. By taking more time in the first couple of days means to say you take away the time from those speakers who are in the last couple of days, so please remember that. The other thing is that there are a row of seats here at the front for speakers, so whenever a motion is being moved, whoever the seconder is

can you please move down to the front and be there. We don't want to waste the time with people moving back and forward across the hall.

I'd like to call on Kay Garvey, who is the Chairperson for the Standing Orders Committee.

Kay Garvey, Chairperson, Standing Orders Committee

Good morning President, Conference, Delegates. Delegates you received Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1 in your Conference pack, and Report No. 2 as you came into the hall. I am now formally moving Standing Orders Report No. 1 and Standing Orders Report No. 2. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Okay. Bill.

Billy Lynn, NIPSA

Brothers and sisters, Billy Lynn on behalf of NIPSA for reference back on paragraph 9 of Standing Orders Report No. 1. If you turn to page 34 of your Agenda you will see that the Standing Orders' Committee is ruling out of order NIPSA's proposed amendment to Motion 79, which is on page 32. Our amendment sought to add two short additional paragraphs to the Belfast Trades' Council motion on the rights of Palestinian people, a paragraph which we believe would have given a better balance to the substantive motion. However, the Standing Orders' Committee decided that objectives of the amendment are contrary to the objectives of the Congress Constitution. We understand that this is on the grounds that the reference in the amendment to a 'Socialist Israel' and a 'Socialist and genuine independent Palestine' are not in keeping with paragraph 6(g) of the Constitution. I quote from it: "To promote fraternal and cooperative relations with trade union Confederations and Congresses in other countries for the purpose of furthering the common interest of workers" etc.

NIPSA fails to see how our amendment conflicts with such a rule. We cannot think of a better way to further the common interest of workers, than through a socialist approach. This is not a party political motion but a statement of fact and reality and we fail to see the difference between the reference to 'socialist' in our amendment and, for example and I quote the reference to "forcing a redistribution of the wealth of society" in Motion 13 - which sounds dangerously socialist to me, or, and I quote again "resolution to fight the neo-liberal zealots" in Motion 15, both in the names of the Executive Council.

Brothers and sisters, we ask you to give Conference the opportunity to debate and discuss our amendment to Motion No. 79 and we urge you to support our union's demand for the reference back.

Thanks very much for listening to me.

Ian McArdle, IBOA

President, General Secretary, fellow delegates, on behalf of IBOA the Finance Union, I would like to note the decision of the Standing Orders Committee in relation to the motion submitted by the IBOA, Motion No. 11, which was to rule it out of order.

The motion called for the creation of an observer seat on the Executive Council to be filled by the Chair of the Congress Youth Committee. IBOA accepts and understand the reason for this decision, but it does so reluctantly and not without some serious disappointment. I am proud to be a member of this hardworking and productive Committee and to serve as its vice-Chair. My colleagues on the Committee are passionate about what we do. We realise that it is essential to improve the levels of participation of young workers in the trade union movement. More importantly perhaps the Committee recognises the need to develop an awareness among young workers on the benefits and relevance of the trade union movement.

Fellow delegates, this Committee is motivated by a stark and simple truth. A trade union movement without a vibrant and dynamic youth movement is a trade union movement without a future. In recognition of this fact, the Youth Committee has completed successfully a number of worthy projects. The Committee has successfully developed and launched the Congress Employment Rights Card, designed to be easily accessible to young workers, detailing their entitlements and rights at work.

We also attended the FAS Opportunities Fair where we got to approach tens of thousands of young students to develop their awareness of the trade union movement. The Committee also organises the Talks to Schools Programme, where we get to meet Leaving Cert students, again to develop their awareness of the trade union movement.

On learning of the decision of the Standing Orders Committee, IBOA General Secretary, Mr. Larry Broderick, took quick action and wrote to his colleagues on the Executive Council calling on them to support him as he sought to co-opt the Chair of the Youth Committee as an observer to the Executive Council. This decision has been postponed until September. Fellow delegates, I call on Conference to support the Executive Council in the creation of this observer seat

and share in my hope that they make the right decision in September. By creating an observer seat for the Youth Committee on the Executive Council, Congress will be seen to embrace a youth movement that is eager, that is committed to educating and involving young workers, and most importantly is passionate about the future of trade unionism in Ireland.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Conference we have had two speakers, one from NIPSA which was just moving reference back, the other one drawing attention to a motion and the deferment to September for observer status on the Executive Council for youth. So if it comes to a vote we're only dealing with the NIPSA agenda. So I'm calling Kay Garvey.

Kay Garvey, Chairperson, Standing Orders Committee

Thank you President. Standing Orders carefully considered the amendment submitted by NIPSA. Standing Orders considered the amendment in the context of the objectives of Congress set out in paragraph 6 of the Congress Constitution. The NIPSA amendment called in particular for the removal of ruling elites and the establishment of a socialist Israel. Standing Orders were concerned that this wording was at odds with the objective of Congress, in particular our commitment to support the democratic system of government. Standing Orders were further concerned that the adoption of this amendment could present difficulties with our trade union colleagues in Israel and put Congress at odds with our stated objective of promoting fraternal cooperative relations with trade unions and trade union federations. For these reasons Standing Orders deem the amendment to be out of order.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. We are going to come to a vote. Unfortunately in a sequence of events we have no Tellers so we're going to have to go - before we come back to the vote - to the election of Tellers.

The Tellers are Peter Rooke, Phyllis Behan, Theresa Kelly, Brian Byrd, Kate Varley and Kevin McCabe. Do we agree the Tellers?

Agreed.

I may as well deal with the Scrutineers now while I'm on it. The Scrutineers for election are Frank Barry, Philip Crosby, Billy Hannigan, Peter McMenamin, Kevin Gaughran, and Jack Kelly. Is that agreed?

Agreed.

Okay. Can the Tellers take their places please? I would also remind delegates that it requires two thirds to win reference back over Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1.

Are the Tellers in place? Okay. We're just waiting on the battle manoeuvres.

Okay. Delegates can I have a bit of quiet please? As I said it requires two thirds. Those in favour of reference back please show. Those against reference back please show. It's defeated.....by a small minority.

Does Conference agree to accept Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1 and Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2? Okay, thank you.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Delegates it's my pleasure to introduce the Presidential Address and to invite Brendan Mackin, in his home town, to address you, Brendan:

Brendan Mackin, Presidential Address

Delegates, honoured guests, Brendan Mackin, President, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and as Peter McLoone has said, a native of Belfast, and proud to be so.

The trade union movement is a movement of working men and working women. Our history is a history of great struggle and great achievement. Our first great struggle was the struggle for the right to organise. For most of our history we have struggled to lift our people out of poverty.

We have fought for the rights and the dignity of working people – the right to vote, the right to have our children educated, the right to decent housing and health services, equal rights for all of our people, the right to dignity and comfort in old age. We have, above all, fought for the right for peace.

We have used many means to advance our cause – the weapons of collective bargaining, industrial action and general strike, political mobilisation and

organisation, lobbying, cooperation and solidarity with our fellow workers worldwide and participation in the institutions of the European Union.

And we have achieved great things. According to the UN Human Development Index for 2004, the Republic of Ireland ranks 10th in the world, and the UK, including Northern Ireland, is in the 12th position. We have joined the club of the richest nations on earth and our society has been transformed in social and economic terms in the last 15 years.

But our struggle is far from over. The UN also publishes a Human Poverty Index. Of the 17 most developed countries in the world, the Republic of Ireland ranks in second last place, just ahead of the US, with 15.3% of Irish people living in poverty. The UK, particularly Northern Ireland, is just one step above in 15th position.

In other words, among the wealthy countries, Ireland, the UK and the US have the highest levels of relative poverty and are among the most unequal societies in the developed world.

This means that we spend less on health, education and on social protection than our European neighbours. The level of income inequality, illiteracy and lower life expectancy among poorer people shows that both Ireland and the UK are very unequal societies.

Many of our people have benefited little from the transformation we have helped to bring about. Others have fallen even further behind the average.

We will never be able to claim that our struggle has been successful until we ensure that all of our people have the means to share in the wealth and prosperity, which our labour creates in modern industries and technologies.

We have helped to bring about a society, which is close to full employment. The proportion of women working is approaching that in other advanced societies. Emigration is a thing of the past. We are a society now, which welcomes and needs immigrant workers. Yet the social support structures have not yet caught up with the new economic conditions.

Compared to many EU countries we have one of the worst systems of childcare provision. As a result, hard-pressed working parents have to spend a large slice of their pay packet on exorbitant childcare costs, often in sub-standard private facilities.

Working parents need comprehensive childcare provision through high quality public service crèches, pre-school facilities and after-school care.

On top of the burden of high childcare costs, working parents are also crippled by the cost of housing – mortgaged or rental - an upward spiral which shows little sign of ending.

Availability and access to affordable and social housing is a core issue. I want to lift the debate to another dimension and I want to compare the different approaches to housing policy in the both parts of the island of Ireland and the need to compare and incorporate best practice.

Everyone here knows that good housing is about more than the number of houses. If it was just about the number of houses being built the housing problem would be solved, particularly in the Republic of Ireland.

Just as:

- good health is about more than the number of hospitals;
- good education is about more than the number of schools;
- and sustainable employment is about more than the number of unemployed.

In the Republic of Ireland, housing policy, determined by the market, is characterised by the following:

- a dramatic escalation in house prices;
- land hoarding by property development cartels;
- home ownership beyond the reach of many;
- rents at very high levels;
- an imbalance between demand and supply;
- longer waiting lists for public housing;
- poor quality private rented accommodation;
- large scale social deprivation on public estates;
- and increasing homelessness.

Last December the NESC said the scale of the housing problem was similar to the 'opening up' of the Irish economy; or to the creation of social partnership.

Government now needs to confront this housing challenge in a serious way.

Contrast this with the experience in the Republic with the experience in Northern Ireland. The Housing Executive is single Regional Strategic Authority. It is seen by all sections of the community as the 'single success story to come from our long conflict.' The Assembly recognised the part it plays not only in housing, but also, in terms of improving the social well-being of people in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive is a body which is active in every Council area in Northern Ireland providing strategic capacity and insight. It is working with and funding local communities in every renewal area and every growth area, targeting its resources carefully and creatively to solve local housing problems. It

spans national, regional and local housing priorities, synthesising its efforts to meet all three agendas.

As a body it has developed its own clear policy voice and has benchmarked standards of housing provision to which the private sector now aspires. It has rich data at its disposal and is fully engaged not only with housing but with the formulation and implementation of a broad sweep of public policy.

The Housing Executive in Northern Ireland is by no means a perfect model and it would never claim to be so. As the strategic Housing Authority it does many things well, but most importantly - it delivers.

I am calling on the Taoiseach and the Irish Government to set up a new single Strategic Housing Agency. This agency would be tasked with framing a national housing policy. It would also research the physical development of the property market, anticipate housing needs and make sure social policies are tested against housing objectives.

This new Agency will engage with central Departments and regional and local authorities, identify and disseminate best practice and oversee and implement the long-term vision of social partnership.

In short, this new Agency would drive and deliver the housing agenda within the framework of public policy including land use, investment, infrastructure, labour market, transport and its impact on excluded and marginalised communities.

The ICTU welcome the progress and growing co-operation between the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Housing Taskforce in the Republic and supports the initiative to set-up an all-island Housing Forum.

It is, as always, the unemployed, the old, women and the low paid who suffer the most from poor social provision, including the high costs of housing and child-care. We must advance and continue to advance the interests of the most vulnerable sectors of the workforce. Increasingly this includes immigrant workers from the new accession states and from outside the EU. And let me make it clear, on this platform: we welcome immigrants and we pledge to work for them all, make no mistake about that. We know, and nobody knows more than the people in this hall, that our hospitals and many other services would collapse without immigrant workers.

I would like at this point to pay tribute to the Turkish workers, employed by the GAMA company, who stood up for their rights.

We are proud that the Irish trade union movement was able to secure for them their rights and entitlements and I pay tribute to the unions within the Construction Industry - UCATT, BATU, Transport and General Workers, and

TEEU, and especially SIPTU - for the support they gave and the efforts they made to ensure the GAMA workers received their rightful entitlements.

Let me also say that if those workers had not been union members and had been depending on the State Inspectorate they would still, to this day, be getting their eyes wiped, would still be being duped and dismayed about life in modern Ireland. I call upon the Labour Inspectorate to publish their report on GAMA in full and make it public.

I would also like to commend the work of other unions in Northern Ireland in relation to migrant workers. For example UNISON and ATGWU in recruiting and supporting both Portuguese and Philippino workers.

But there are many other cases where immigrant workers suffer scandalous abuse and exploitation, North and South, which are never publicised.

We will not and must not leave them behind and we look forward to them playing the same role in building the Irish trade union movement as the Irish immigrant workers played in building the trade unions of Britain, America, Australia and throughout the world. We want them in our ranks.

However, Conference, one of the main areas where we have not yet succeeded is in the area of pensions. One in every two workers is still not covered by an occupational pension scheme. Most of those without cover are the low paid, the unorganised, part-time workers and women.

There is no simple solution to this problem as Congress showed in our publication *Irish Pensions: Problems and Solutions*, which published in May (2004). However we must at least try to ensure that the State pension is increased to a target of at least 34% of average industrial earnings. Those in the Republic who have taken out Special Savings Investment Accounts should be given the facility to convert them into pension funds. And we must defend much more vigorously the Defined Benefit Pensions Schemes which employers are trying to dismantle all over Ireland and Britain.

Here in Northern Ireland for decades the ICTU has campaigned for peace, has opposed sectarianism and has opposed violence from all quarters. We have helped to achieve peace of a kind. The kind of peace we want is more than an absence of violence. The situation in the North is of course vastly improved from what it was a decade ago.

But it is peace with political paralysis, peace without direction. And our people are suffering from that paralysis.

According to the Eurostat, GDP per capita in Northern Ireland is 91.2% of the EU average of 25 countries, compared to almost 130% for the Republic. The

difference represents almost €8,000 less per year for every man woman and child in Northern Ireland.

Interestingly, the figure for the Border, Midlands and West Region in the Republic is similar to that of Northern Ireland. This shows that there are huge imbalances in the distribution of wealth and resources both within the Republic and UK.

The reasons for these imbalances are in the end of the day political.

There is no reason why the whole island should not enjoy similar levels of prosperity from Cork to Belfast, from Connemara to South Dublin. But for this we need political leadership, driving change and progress, we need co-ordination; sharing of resources where appropriate and cooperation between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland.

We need common projects in energy, in health, education, in transport, in tourism. A lot has been done and is being done, but so much more is possible if our political leaders in Northern Ireland could see past petty political point scoring.

It is imperative that the political institutions under the Good Friday Agreement are re-established and fully resourced as soon as possible.

We need Ministers in Stormont who are answerable to local people and who can work with us in the ICTU and with others to find solutions. We need to get the Cross-border bodies up and running and fully co-operating so that we can get all of the Peace Dividend, not half of it. And we must insist that there is automatic representation for Congress on all such bodies.

We have not fully reaped the benefits of the Peace Dividend and we will not do so until we have fully functional political institutions as laid out in Strand 1, Strand 2 and Strand 3, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

Let me just say Conference, that Agreement remains the only democratic mandate, which the people of the island as a whole have given to all of our politicians as the foundation for a lasting peace.

If our local politicians cannot or will not make it work, then it is up to the two Governments to find other ways to implement the will of the people.

Or alternatively, there is the option for all the political players to construct and agree an inclusive alternative that has the capacity to receive a democratic mandate comparable to the Good Friday Agreement.

We have much the same problems in common in Northern Ireland and the Republic, with our colleagues in Scotland and Wales. Literacy problems affect

25% of the population, education and health services are stretched to breaking point and indeed are in crisis, transport and infrastructure problems abound, there are intractable pockets of poverty and deprivation.

Some regions and some sections of society are not getting a fair share of resources or investment.

Our colleagues in the Labour movement in Scotland, England and Wales, both in the TUCs and the Regional Parliaments are well aware that, despite funded programmes, there needs to be a greater commitment to forming strong links, at all levels, between organisations and businesses throughout these islands.

We need to form common alliances for specific projects to maximise the benefits from EU programmes, to maximise and control Foreign Direct Investment and to get into joint campaigns to lobby the two Governments and lobby within Europe.

These campaigns should include partnerships between private sector companies, between public service organisations, between universities and development projects and between communities, as well as joint trade union campaigns on Workers Rights, Education, Health, Childcare policies etc.

To do this successfully, our politicians - both North and South – and our colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales, must take the lead and commit themselves to developing the Strand 3 East-West dimension, as well as the Strand 2, North-South dimension of the Good Friday Agreement.

Because of our strong relations with the TUC and the Scottish and Welsh TUC we are perhaps in a unique position to make a powerful contribution to this process. But the political structures must be there and the political leadership must be forthcoming if we are to realise the full potential of joint strategic co-operation and how we influence policy.

We must also be aware of the European context, not least because the EU has made a very substantial financial contribution to overcoming the legacy of three decades of violence in Ireland. Much doubt however has been cast on the future of Europe following the French and Dutch referenda.

Congress has supported the process of EU integration with some reservations. We, along with our colleagues in the ETUC, were concerned that issues of Social Solidarity and workers rights were being sidelined especially after the Lisbon Agenda of 2000.

There is certainly a struggle going on between those of us who want a Social Market and those who want an unfettered Free Market with privatisation, deregulation and the rolling back of workers rights. We fought back and succeeded, for example, in having the regressive Services Directive withdrawn.

The rejection of the draft Constitution by the people of France and the Netherlands was in part a protest against the failure to give equal weight to social protection as to market reform.

The people want a united prosperous Europe. They do not want a race to the bottom. They want high levels of social protection, and a high threshold of minimum social and employment rights.

It is interesting that you see a lot of the media and indeed from other sources, all wanting to portray Europe as clapped-out, exhausted and unable to deal with the realities of the modern globalising era. That is not true.

Levels of productivity are quite similar in France and Germany as in the US and their productivity and investment levels are higher than Britain's. The EU has a Balance of Trade surplus of €50 billion with the rest of the world while, for example, the US has enormous Federal and Trade Deficits. So much for being clapped-out.

The economic problems in Europe are largely the problems of France, Germany and Italy. Only the governments of those countries can solve those problems. They are caused by domestic policies and circumstances, not by any European rules or regulations.

Let me just say we will not join the ranks of the Eurosceptics. Europe has been good for Ireland and good for its working people.

And it has been good for us exactly because it is not a deregulated, *laissez-faire* economic model. It seeks to combine the benefits of a huge internal market with balancing regional and social programmes for poorer areas.

It seeks to combine economic efficiency with the idea of equality for men and women; of basic standards of Health and Safety for all. It is not, for example, the EU that is trying to dilute our rights under the Working Time Directive, it is the British government.

We have heard a lot about Boston versus Berlin. What about Boston versus Stockholm or Helsinki?

Sweden and Finland, with populations similar to the whole of the island of Ireland, are among the most successful economies in the world; they are at the leading edge of many of the most advanced industries and technologies. They also have the highest levels of social protection; high levels of taxation to pay for it and they are also flexible and competitive.

Moreover the gap between the richest and the poorest sectors of their society is much less than it is in Ireland or in Britain.

We will not be browbeaten into believing that all we have to do to achieve economic success is to dismantle much of the Welfare State, row back on workers' rights and cut taxes. We will not be browbeaten into believing that.

The rejection of the EU Constitution by France and the Netherlands is not a rejection of Europe. It is a rejection of an agenda for a Europe with high profits and incomes for the few and high insecurity and lack of protection for the many.

Whatever happens with the EU Constitution now, we are determined that Social Europe will not be compromised.

The French and the Dutch have delivered a clear message to the political elites – you cannot build a prosperous Europe on the backs of the poor, or by undermining security of employment.

The No voters may have done a good day's work for the people of Europe if it leads to an acceptance that economic and social progress are not trade-offs. They must go hand in hand.

One of the most important elements of the Draft Constitution is the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Whether the Constitution survives in its present form or not, we will and must fight to have that Charter enshrined in the law of the land in Ireland and Britain, because that charter on its own is the cornerstone of a Constitution for any civilised society.

Let us not forget that, for all its faults, the EU is one of the best defences we have against the worst aspects of globalisation. Let me just say, and people may agree or disagree, but Congress is not against globalisation. We want a globalisation that is managed for the benefit of people, the benefit of nations and the benefit of continents.

We reject not globalisation but the neoliberal agenda of privatisation, deregulation and unfettered *laissez-faire* economic and political systems that enrich only the few and perpetuate poverty for the many. That is what we reject.

European programmes have helped to rejuvenate many communities devastated by factory closures and social problems. We can use the power and membership of the EU to insist that access to EU markets must be linked to basic standards of decent treatment for workers in developing countries.

It is not just the poor and disadvantaged in Ireland who have been left behind by the huge expansion of wealth and trade in the world as a result of a globalisation driven by free trade and new technologies.

Let us not forget that more than half the population of the planet has also been left behind.

The Asian Tsunami last year killed about 290,000 people. Governments, individuals and Congress members dug deep to help the survivors overcome that terrible tragedy.

What is not so well known is that over 30,000 people die from poverty around the world every single day. That is a disaster on the scale of the Tsunami every nine days. The stark reality is that an estimated 600 million children live in absolute poverty. Every year more than 10 million children die of hunger and preventable diseases. And in the short time, though it may not seem short to you, it takes me to deliver this speech, over 500 children will have died, needlessly.

- Income per person in the poorest countries in Africa has fallen by a quarter in the past 20 years.

In Palestine the number of people living in poverty has tripled in approximately 4 years. Today, according to World Bank statistics, over 60% of the population of Palestine lives under a poverty line of \$2 per day.

More than half a million women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year, and that statistic is startling - one death a minute.

The United Nations believes that unfair trade rules deny poor countries more than £400 billion every year.

Over 1 billion people live on less than 70p a day.

Most African countries are crippled with debt repayments. For example, Malawi spends one third of government revenues on debt-related payments, more than double what is spent on health or education.

That is the bad news that we are all too familiar with. But there is good news also. At last it seems that many governments in the rich world are prepared to take action.

We must surely support the call of Gordon Brown for a "modern Marshall Plan" for Africa. We welcome the G8 decision to cancel the debts of 18 of the world's poorest countries.

But this is only the first step to realising the UN Millennium Development Goal of halving world poverty by 2015.

At the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in two weeks time, we will know how serious the rich world is about reaching this goal.

Will they provide the resources to fund immunisation programmes for malaria and HIV/Aids? Will they double ongoing aid to Africa from \$50 billion to \$100 billion, the minimum required? Even if they do, \$100 billion is only one tenth of world military expenditure in the last year.

Half of that, nearly \$500 billion, was spent by the U.S. government. The Bush administration so far has spent over \$200 billion in the last two years waging an immoral, illegal war in Iraq.

Clearly there is no shortage of resources. There is no reason why every developed country cannot reach the target of 0.7% of GDP annually in aid.

It amounts to the price of a pint of beer for each person per week in the richer countries - unless you're drinking in Dublin then it's more.

If we reach that target we can provide poor countries, where up to half the adult population are dying of AIDS, with the drugs they need; with the clean water supplies they need; with the schools and health services they need.

All of this is achievable. I can say quite clearly, it is not pie in the sky.

Make Poverty History at home and abroad! We can do that.

We have the resources to rescue all of our people from poverty. We have the resources in the developed world to eradicate half of the fatal poverty, which exists within 10 years. At Gleneagles and elsewhere, we will add our voice to those of the majority of the world who want to Make Poverty History.

We live in a time of great promise, of undreamed of new technologies and opportunities. We have for the first time in our history the resources to tackle all social problems, eradicate poverty and to ensure that no-one is left behind.

We are an integral part of a European Project, which also has yet to realise its full potential. We are part of a global community where half the population are, so far, denied the means to realise any kind of potential.

All of this may be changing and Congress, as part of the labour movement throughout the world, is going to be part of the solution.

When we negotiate the next National Agreement with the Irish Government and employers, we will be putting forward workable solutions.

We will advance constructive solutions at meetings with NIO Ministers and hopefully on the various bodies in the Three Strands of the Good Friday Agreement.

With our colleagues in Europe we will defend and advance the best traditions of European Social Democracy. In our solidarity work we will contribute, in money, ideas and lobbying to end the obscene conditions, which disfigure half of humanity.

Finally, Congress to return to the first point I made: *“Our first great struggle was the struggle for the right to organise.”* That is a struggle, which has still not been won in many places.

In others it has been won but lost again. It seems it is something we have to fight for over and over again in every generation. It must always remain at the top of our agenda.

The future of the trade union movement lies with the recruitment, organisation and representation and servicing of workers - this is our priority. There can be no complacency about this issue and neither should we be despondent about where we are and who we are at the present time.

In his Presidential address to the 55th Irish Trade Union Congress in Belfast, July 1949, James Larkin T.D. spoke on the theme, A Common Loyalty – The Bridge to Unity.

He stated and I quote:

“the year which has passed has witnessed a growth and strengthening of the Irish Trade Union Congress which is heartening...My only hope is that this movement of Irish working men and women, drawn from the thirty two Counties of Ireland, may continue to be as it has been for more than fifty years, a meeting ground for Irish trade unionists, regardless of politics or religious views”.

In 1949 Congress had 196,000 members. Today Congress has 800,000 members. This puts into context the doom merchants who predict no future for the trade union movement.

Our future lies nowhere else but in our hands. Let us go forward together.

Thank you.

Okay Conference can we settle down, we've still got the order of business to move on with. And those leaving the hall please try to do so quietly.

I'd like to call on David Begg, General Secretary, to welcome fraternal delegates and visitors and to introduce the Biennial Report.

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

Thank you very much indeed President, and let me be the first to congratulate you on your excellent speech, and just to say you left your gin and tonic up here.

It's my pleasure now colleagues to say a word of welcome to our fraternal delegates and guests and there's quite a long list of them so perhaps you would hold any applause that you have until I get to the end, just in the interests of timekeeping.

First of all it's my great pleasure to welcome our very, very good friend Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC. A particular welcome to you Frances, she's just joined us on the platform there. I also want to welcome distinguished former General Secretary of Congress, Peter Cassells. I include in mentioning people, their partners as well, I'm not sure whether I should do so with Peter because of course Paula is one of our colleagues here on the staff of Congress, but anyway Peter you're very welcome.

I want to welcome the former Presidents of Congress: Bill Attley, Jim McCusker, Harold O'Sullivan, Chris Kirwan, Phil Flynn, Joe O'Toole and Eddie Browne. From the People's College, Dr. Sheila Conroy, from the Labour Court, the Chair Kevin Duffy, Deputy Chairs Ray McGee and Caroline Jenkinson, and the Worker Members of the Labour Court, Padraigin Ni Mhurchu, Noel O'Neill and Jack Nash, and Pat McCartan of the LRA. From the Commission the Chair Maurice Cashel, and the Director of Conciliation Services, Kevin Foley.

From the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the Executive Council of the AFLCIO, James Hoffa and his colleague Jerry Zelhoffer. From the Palestinian Trade Unions, I want to welcome Bayer Saeed Hamamdeh and Mahmood Abu Odeh. From the Department of Finance in the Republic, Ciaran Connolly. From the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Clare Tiernan and Breda Power. From the Scottish TUC, Anne Douglas, President; and from the ETUC John Monks.

One of our distinguished speakers during the week will be Barbara Ehrenreich who is author of the book *Nickel and Dimed* and she will be speaking to us later on. Others are Madeline Bunting of the Guardian Newspaper and author of *Willing Slaves* and John Sweeney who is the Senior Policy Analyst of the

National Economic and Social Council. I also want to welcome Lord Brett, the Director of the ILO in London, which covers Ireland as well.

From the Retired Workers Committee, Charlie Hammond, from the Disability Committee Brendan Conway, and from the Congress Centres, Deirdre Smyth.

From the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment also, the Secretary General Sean O’Gorman, and later on this evening we will have as our guest Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and from the EU Commission John Doyle, and also from the ETUC Rheiner Hoffman. So I’d appreciate if you’d give them all a very warm Congress welcome.

Colleagues in introducing the Annual Report I point out to you, as you will have seen from the platform here, and from the material that has been published, that our theme this year is ‘Quality of Work = Quality of Life’ and what we are trying to do is to emphasise that a country is not just an economy, a country is a society as well, and we wish to say that economic growth, important though it is, is not an end in itself, it has to be matched by social development which means an increase in wellbeing for all the citizens of a country. And we want to emphasise and push home the point that work has to be organised to adjust to this reality that people work for fulfilment and they work for money, but they do not see work as an end in itself, work is a means to a better life for everybody. So that is the theme of the report.

The report, as you will notice is constructed in four main sections which are colour coded. The first deals with Organisation – internal Congress organisation and organisational issues which the President has addressed as well in his opening remarks. The second section in blue deals with the economy generally and all the issues which surround that, including defence of the public realm. The third is the main theme Quality of Working Life which we will be attending to on Thursday, and lastly Europe and the wider world, which is our theme for Friday morning.

Now the motions and the timetable of Conference have been aligned to try as best we can, all of these have been synchronised, and hopefully you will find it reasonably easy to follow proceedings and you will see a coherence and a cohesion to them all.

I must confess colleagues that I came here to Conference as a delegate for, I think, nearly 20 years, and I wasn’t the most diligent reader of the Executive Council Report. I was the type of delegate who was inclined to take it out a couple of nights before going to the Congress, but I want to out myself and say that was a terrible mistake, because the report is a very useful record of the work that Congress is doing on behalf of the trade union movement, but also a very useful reference document in terms of where we are on current issues that we are trying to represent either to government or employers or whatever.

But if you are a bit like me and you didn't get a chance to go through it all, I should mention that there is an overview section in the Foreword, which is on pages 3-6 which tries to give a 'bird's eye view' of everything that's happening and what the key issues are for the trade union movement. It's important as well of course because this is a document which is the window on the movement for the wider world and which other people read people who will want to know exactly what we are all about. So those four pages try to encapsulate it all. I hope as I say that you find it useful and user-friendly, and that you have a good week, remember Conference not just for business, but for socialising and for meeting people and I hope that you will have a good week in Belfast.

The Rights of Migrant Workers

(Motions 1 – 7)

11.00 – 13.00

(Principal EC Report reference Section1, Chapter 1, “Migration Policy & the Rights of Workers”)

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you David. I want to call the Guinness Staff Association on Motion 1, Migrant Workers.

If anyone is seconding it, can they come to the front please. The other thing, Sean, just before you start, movers are getting 5 minutes, seconders are getting 3 minutes, and right of reply is 3 minutes, so I want you to stick to that. The other thing is motions 1-6 are being taken in common debate so any of the movers and seconders of motions 1-6 can they please come to the front.

Sean Mackell, Guinnesss Staff Union

Mr. President, colleagues, Sean Mackell, Guinness Staff Union to move Motion No. 1 on the plight of migrant workers. I want to start by saying that it's very apt that the issue of the exploitation of these workers is the first topic to be discussed by Conference in Belfast. You may not know it, but Belfast some 200 years ago became the first city in these islands to oppose slavery and to call in turn for its abolition. Just down the road from here the great American abolitionist and slave Frederick Douglas told a huge rally in the 1840s that the white man's happiness cannot be purchased by the black man's misery. Well I have bad news for Frederick and for the good people of Belfast, there are men and women in this country today who are causing misery to a new type of slave, the migrant worker.

This movement of ours has long taken a principled stand against oppression and exploitation of workers. It is a core value that we all subscribe to and is one of the reasons why I am proud to call myself a trade unionist. When I look at what's happening in Ireland, North and South today, I feel sick to my stomach at the naked exploitation of men and women from other countries who are forced to come to these shores to try and make a living. And what happens when they arrive here?

Let me give you a few examples. Mrs. Salvacion Orge a Philipino lady went to work as a beauty therapist on Irish Ferries and was paid 75p an hour, and it took

our colleagues in the seafaring unions to get that one sorted out. Twenty three year old Oksana Sukonova left her job in a poultry factory in County Antrim last September, by Christmas she was living rough on the streets of Coleraine. She spoke no English, had no work permit and couldn't find any work. By the time they found her frostbite had set in and she had to have her two legs amputated, a healthy 23 year old girl left her home for a brighter future in this country and went home an invalid. Before Christmas five Polish joiners were found sleeping rough under the bushes in Belfast and they had come on the promise of jobs but when they arrived here there was none there and they were forced onto the streets. Incidentally, Simon the charity for the homeless recently stated that foreign people accounted for some 20% of their clients in the North.

But by far the biggest scandal took place in Dublin. Workers from Turkey were brought in by the construction company GAMA to work not on farms or in coffee bars, but for the Irish State. And despite working on State projects it was revealed in the Dail by their champion, Deputy Joe Higgins, that these folk were never given a wage slip, a clear breach in the Payment of Wages Act. Deputy Higgins also pointed out that not only had GAMA deposited €9 million of workers' wages in a bank in Holland, but no worker was given full details of this. He also said that some contract workers in GAMA worked an 84 hour week for which they were paid €200. That's right: €2.50 an hour. And what was the response of the Irish Government, our Social Partner, to this abuse? Well the Minister for Overseas Development (Conor Lenihan, TD) told Deputy Higgins to "stick to the kebabs" a crass and insensitive comment, and one he had to later apologise for. The Minister for Trade, Enterprise & Employment (Micheal Martin, TD) looked constipated, wrung his hands and appeared awfully upset. In fairness he also asked the Labour Inspectorate to prepare a report on this matter, but GAMA went to the High Court and stopped the Inspectorate publishing a report. What the government should have done was to call GAMA in and tell them to put their house in order or they were off the job.

This was a disgraceful situation and must never be allowed to happen again. But one of the good things that came out of this was the role of our colleagues in Congress, SIPTU, and the building and craft workers in this dispute and they provided the leadership, support and funds for these workers. And when we write the history of this disgraceful episode in Irish industrial relations history, Congress, SIPTU and the building and craft workers can hold their heads up high. Well done comrades.

It is our view that the governments, North and South, should be forced to do the job we elect them for. As a start, employers should be told that if workers work in Ireland they should be paid the Irish rate for the job. Alf McGrath on behalf of Irish Ferries was recently quoted in the Sunday Tribune, as saying: "if you have a Pole then you pay Polish rates." We reject that. We believe that if you work in Ireland you get Irish rates and we want the government to ensure that happens. If the legislation is weak, and I'll finish on this point Chairman, then make it

stronger, if we need more Labour Inspectors, give us more. But help these people. This is a scandal that needs action now, and that is why we are calling for you to support this motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Have we got a seconder for the motion? Formally seconded.

Okay, look I omitted to ask David to move the section of the debate on migrant policy, and just on the basis of technicalities, if he could do that now, just to ensure that nobody comes back to say we didn't do it.

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

Yes, thank you very much President. I did want to move this section of the report because it is something which is very important as I think most delegates will observe, because I want to set this question of the treatment of migrant workers into a broader policy context of immigration policy and the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. I think it is necessary for Congress to articulate a coherent policy on this and in the Executive Council Report the very first chapter deals with this issue, on pages 9-14.

I think everything has changed quite radically in a relatively short period of time. Since we met in Conference the last time, the issue of migration and the treatment of immigrant workers and the impact on labour markets have dramatically moved up the agenda. Not just with us, but on the political agenda of most European countries. The push-pull factors of poverty and destitution in the Developing World on the one hand and population and ageing on the other will ensure that it stays there, I think. The number of motions on the agenda today is a reflection of that reality and this is a very good thing I think, good that we would give it priority.

Because after all, the philosophy of trade unionism is that all people are born equal, that they are endowed with some fundamental rights and they shouldn't be treated as commodities in the market system. And in accordance with that believe, trade unions have been to the forefront as Sean has very kindly pointed out, in fighting racism, xenophobia, and exploitation, both here in Northern Ireland and in the Republic as well.

We did for example organise special events in Dublin and Belfast to welcome the accession of the 10 new member countries to the European Union on May Day in 2004. We supported, although there was a lot of contrary views to this, the opening up of the labour market to citizens of those countries. We opposed people who in the course of the second Nice Referendum tried to make immigration an issue for opposing the referendum. We ourselves opposed the

Citizenship Referendum last year because we believed that it was fundamentally wrong, and we provide through the Congress Industrial Office – and I want to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues in the Industrial Office and the other trade union members who support them – an Outreach Programme to migrant workers, which tries to bring them into the movement, to try to explain their rights and to try to get a broad handle on what's happening.

But despite these positive developments, discrimination on the basis of race continues to be a significant problem in the Irish workplace, and this can be evidenced in the fact that along with the grounds of gender, race accounted for a disproportionately high number of cases for both the Equality Authority and the Equality Tribunal, in 2003.

Actually if you heard the figures for 2004 there is a consistent pattern there. And furthermore it should be borne in mind that the available statistics on the integration of migrant workers into the Irish workplace may possibly, and almost certainly does, fall victim to underreporting of discriminatory practices, because people are often afraid or otherwise to bring forward that information. The research that was carried out by Conroy and Brennan in 2002 found that the support infrastructure for migrant workers was very weak, uneven and haphazard. Many of the people they interviewed weren't even aware of their rights and obligations as members of the workforce.

This research also indicated that non-payment, or delayed payment of wages, excessive working hours, especially for manual workers, levels of pay below the minimum wage, and poor understanding of health and safety procedures, are practices among workers who were not members of unions and who did not speak English. Although this may not be formal research, certainly the experiences which both the President and Sean have referred to and which our colleagues are picking up in the Outreach Programme, would indicate, anecdotally at least, that the position is certainly as bad, or worse, than the formal research indicates.

Trade Unions have been very active in defending the interest of immigrant workers, and barely a week goes by without some high profile case of abuse being exposed. And the work that has been done has actually got a very positive response from the public. We don't always get a positive response if we are arguing about some of the semi-states or something like that, but we got a very positive response from the public because people do identify that this is real, hardcore, trade union work. And it is interesting to look at the statistics as well about the immigrants to Ireland, because I think about 70% of them are in low paid employment, even though their qualifications on average are higher than the indigenous population. The impact of that concentration is bad, because it forces down the level of wages, that is for lower paid people, whereas if you had a more even spread and if people were employed to the level of their qualifications you

would spread the impact across the economy and in fact what you could get is a narrowing of inequality in society generally.

Now again as has been pointed out, non-national workers are an increasingly important component of the labour force. Key sectors of the economy like healthcare, hospitality, horticulture, some elements of construction and so on, couldn't function without them. The problem is though, that there is a mentality amongst some employers that sees immigrant workers and immigrant labour as a source to be exploited, or at best as a tap, that can be turned on or turned off as the needs of the economy require it. It's a mentality that's actually indulged within the context of a weak policy framework and an approach to labour market regulation which is actually designed to facilitate a culture of impunity. This light-touch regulation has been a deliberate policy decision on the part of government so as not to affect the labour market, and we are seeing the consequence of that now.

So we clearly need a coherent and an ethical policy framework which deals with immigration and its' labour market impacts. And as a good practice, policy making should be evidence-based. The problem here is that because immigration is such a relatively new experience for us in Ireland, there is no systematic data on how immigration has impacted on us. We need to know, for example, whether the wages and conditions advertised by employers when they are seeking job permits, are actually being paid, and we don't know. We need to know whether the arrival of people from Eastern Europe was more or less than we had expected when the labour market was opened. And we can't begin to get a grip on a situation like that unless we provide the means to do so. And that's why having a properly-resourced Labour Inspectorate, operating within a legal framework that allows them to do their job, is so essential. As last week's court case points out, that legal environment doesn't actually exist at all. Huge power has been taken from them to be effective, and the GAMA experience means, I think, that the game is up as far as maintaining the fiction of an effective Labour Inspectorate is concerned.

And not alone will we have to get changes in this area, but we will also want public procurement tendering decisions to require the equivalent of a sort of tax clearance certificate on the people who want jobs, or who want those big contracts in terms of their compliance with Labour Market conditions. I mean if we want them to be tax compliant it's not unreasonable that we would ask them to be compliant as far as the labour market laws are concerned and as far as the industry norms are concerned as well.

We have also demanded in *Sustaining Progress*, and I'm pleased to say that we have had a little bit of progress on this, a curb on the recruiting agencies, and we have been trying to point out that these people are operating the modern equivalent of a hiring fare, and what we don't want here is the emergence of a gangmaster culture such as we have seen in the United Kingdom, which in

fairness has been tackled there, but which has had such appalling consequences that we know about.

Now a white paper has been issued by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment. We are circulating it to you this week, asking for your comments, so we can feed back into that, and we hope that legislation will be published on it in the earlier part of next year.

In looking at the options for constructing an immigration policy there are, in my opinion, essentially two key building blocks. First of all we need to ensure that there is an effective labour market test to ensure that employment is not put at risk by immigration. It will do nobody any good to allow that situation to happen. But it is possible to operate that test in a way which at least allows some portability in the work permits system, either within defined job categories or within a period of time. Because, I'll tell you one thing, the existing work permit system is fundamentally wrong, it's actually little better than bonded slavery.

Now the second building block is a permanent residency provision which doesn't exist at present. The only route to permanency is through naturalisation. Now this system could be based on a points-based system with criteria which encourages integration of people into Irish society. Canada would be a good example of the operation of that sort of scheme. And a further advantage is that the criteria could be altered from time to time depending on what the labour market needs of the economy happen to be.

The position of asylum seekers and refugees is different from that of economic migrants. The former have rights in international law that have to be vindicated. The term 'bogus asylum seeker' is a pejorative term and it's sometimes true that asylum seekers are in reality economic migrants, but I'll tell you one thing colleagues because I've seen it, that very often those people are fleeing from economic conditions that any sane person would flee from. So calling them 'bogus asylum seekers' is a meaningless concept in terms of what those people are facing.

Now there have to be limits on what any island can accommodate, it's not the United States of course, but we have to find a humane way of applying those limits and separating mothers from children in the middle of the night, or policemen going into classrooms and taking children out, is simply not acceptable. Whatever else we are as a nation, that is not what we are about.

There has to be a realisation that when people come into a country and mix with the indigenous population they form relationships, whether it is children in the classroom at school, whether it is workers at work, whether it is people who just meet up and fall in love: it happens and what do you do? I mean if your son or daughter falls in love with somebody from Ghana or Nigeria or and suddenly they're yanked away in the middle of the night, what are you going to do about it?

You know the pain and the hurt that's caused as a result of that, and that is actually what is happening all the time. Realistically it is a huge social problem.

Now I can understand that an amnesty could, in certain circumstances, undermine the credibility of the asylum process. But could we not introduce, shall we call it a 'regularisation policy' for people who have lived amongst us as decent friends and neighbours for several years. Asylum numbers have now fallen, the systems for dealing with the applications are improving and the risks that were there maybe in the early stages are not there any longer. I think it is time for us to be innovative and humane in our approach. It is not humane to leave people in uncertainty for years on end and then pounce on them out of the blue and simply deport them. That is absolutely, fundamentally wrong.

Now in the body of the Executive Council Report we have dealt with other aspects of this topic and I commend it to your reading at some stage because we have looked at it from the perspective of sustainable development of the economy and society, and policy coherence in relation to aid to the developing countries from which these people come in the first case. We have to look at it in a totally holistic way. And you know it's a sobering thought for us, I think, that 40 years after immigration to its shores became a phenomenon for our nearest neighbour, that the Tory party in the recent election could campaign on the question of immigration and spreading fear and resentment amongst the population in order to get votes. Now it is unconscionable for us as a movement and as a society if we allow our country to develop in that way, that those race relations problems and that type of conduct could happen here.

I think we can claim some sense of achievement in the way unions have responded to defend the immigrant population. It's work, which as I said, enjoys very strong public support. It's worth noting for example that because the law is based on individual rights, the ultimate settlement of the GAMA case in the Labour Court could only have been achieved through collective trade union action. And clearly the number of motions on the agenda reflects the importance placed on continuing this work and in making it a priority. And to do this effectively, echoing a theme here that the President set, we have to organise: that's our mission, to achieve social justice by organising workers in trade unions and using our collective strength then to get a fairer distribution of the wealth created in the economy. And if you wake up on a bad Monday morning, and you go to the window and you look out and it's raining, and you think that you've a Labour Court hearing on that day which mightn't go too well, or a difficult meeting with employers, or a difficult branch meeting that night, just remember: this is precisely why it's worth getting out of bed in the morning, because you can make a real and fundamental difference to the lives of human beings. That is really the core of trade union work and it is a great privilege to be able to do it.

In conclusion colleagues, I just want to mention in a couple of sentences the plight of our own immigrants. It's less than 20 years you know since 44,000

people every year were leaving Ireland. Many of them succeeded in their adopted countries, many more have returned here to claim their share of economic prosperity, and fair play to them. But there is a lost generation of people, principally those who went to work in the construction industry in the 1950s who will never return. Life has moved on too far for them to be able to do that. These are people who are now in the twilight of their years and who in some cases exist on the margins of society. Now their plight has been well publicised in the media and documented in the Report on the Commission on Emigrants upon which I had the privilege to serve. It will be forever, I think, to the shame of our nation if we refuse to spend the €20 million or so which is necessary to implement the recommendations of that Commission before it's too late to make a difference to that lost generation of people. I think, Conference, we must keep at this at every opportunity we can and I would like if Conference today sent out that message to the Irish government to 'do the decent thing by these decent people'.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you David. Motion No. 2 from NATFHE.

Jim McKeown, NATFHE

President, Jim McKeown, NATFHE. Not much left to say after that. Congress our motion is about migrant workers, but this movement can't ignore the plight of asylum seekers and refugees who arrive here to escape torture and persecution. Their treatment by our governments - deportations and jailings – are an affront to a civilised society. They serve only to deepen the misery of those people. Our governments must do better but that is a debate for another day. People of different colours, creeds and nationalities come here for a better life and to support their families. They are now a visible aspect of our everyday life, and that diversity is certain to expand. When the Baltic states and Poland joined the EU the British Government expected 13,000 migrant workers in the first year. Instead 173,000 came. And that government has no idea how many entered illegally from non-EU states. Some estimate the figure as high as 250,000.

The Institute for Conflict Research last year estimated that there were 25,000 migrant workers in the North, mainly in hospitals and food production. And that report charts a valuable contribution to our society made by those people. But the BBC Spotlight report showed a different side: gangmasters smuggling people here illegally to work on remote farms and production units, at pay rates way below the minimum wage, crammed into poor housing in what is modern day slavery.

In 1999 the Republic issued 6,250 work permits to non-EU nationals. By 2003 this had risen to 48,000. In 2004 the Garda Immigration Section had 127,000 registered immigrant workers from EU countries but they have no knowledge as to the number of unregistered workers and governments North and South have no idea of the number of people who have come here illegally in order to seek work. These developments have major consequences for all of us. The Republic's National Council Consultative Committee on Racism has documented an increasing pattern of racism and discrimination directed at migrant workers - verbal to physical abuse and outright violence, exploitation and a denial of workers' rights.

Belfast is described as the racist capital of Europe. The PSNI has reported that hate crime in Northern Ireland doubled over the past year – 634 incidents of criminal damage, and 187 actual woundings or assaults. The clear-up rate was below 16%.

Recently, as this Conference has already heard, we learned of the scandal at Irish Ferries and the Turkish workers and the exploitation they were fighting at GAMA Construction. Conference, those are simply the tip of an iceberg. There have been even more horrific examples. We heard about the young woman from Coleraine in our own society here. But let's not forget the deaths of 30 Chinese workers, smuggled into Britain illegally, picking cockles in Morecambe Bay and we have seen smuggled workers suffocating in the backs of lorries. This is a big issue for this movement. If for no other reason than for self-interest, to ignore the issue is to give free reign to unscrupulous employers and employment agencies to exploit a growing pool of willing labour.

That aside we exist to defend the vulnerable, to ensure workers are treated fairly, that employment rights are respected. We must organise and recruit these workers and stand shoulder to shoulder as a united workforce. We must tackle racism where it arises, but we need to go further. Congress and many organisations and agencies across the country are working to combat racism and provide support to migrant workers. Bodies such as the Equality Commissions North and South, the Migrant Workers' Forum, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme to name but a few. But there is no central coordination of support. There has to be engagement from central government and the statutory agencies, those concerned with immigration, health services, housing, education and law enforcement – they need to work alongside the unions and the voluntary sector to develop a network of support ranging from information services to healthcare, housing, the justice system and representation in the workplace.

Congress has the organisation and the clout to give leadership and direction, to pull it together, to force our governments to tackle exploitation in the workplace and end abuse and racism in our communities. That's what this motion asks Congress to do. Please support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Jim. Secunder? Formally seconded. Moving onto Motion 3 in the name of BATU.

Paddy O'Shaughnessy, BATU

President, fellow delegates, Paddy O'Shaughnessy, BATU.

The immigration of foreign workers into this country is a very recent development. When this Conference last met in 2003 we had no motions on immigration. This year there are 6, each in its own way setting out the major challenge which faces us as trade unionists in the 21st Century.

And what is the challenge? In essence the challenge is no different in substance to the challenge faced by the founders of the Irish Trade Union Movement in the early years of the last century. Our job is to organise, to protect the interests of individual workers from the threat of exploitation by employers, indigenous or otherwise. Our job is to educate so that workers' rights and just entitlements are clearly understood throughout society, not only by the immigrant workers, but by the people around them who understand exactly what the problem is. And our job is to exercise our collective power in the interests of those who would otherwise be powerless and downtrodden.

But most of all I think it is our job to make it clear to employers, to government, and to everyone in this society, that it doesn't matter where a worker comes from - Turkey, China, Africa or Eastern Europe – they are just as entitled as anyone else to fair rates of pay, proper conditions of employment and equality of treatment, that is non-negotiable, that must be the bottom line.

In the building industry in the Republic we have had a number of examples of outright exploitation, and on such a scale that it makes it quite clear that while the pay and conditions of employment of the individual workers are basic and rudimentary by any standards, the scale and nature of the operation run by the employer is sophisticated and well thought out. The rates of pay and conditions of employment may be Third World, but the managerial operation is most definitely First World.

We are all aware of the scale of the challenge that faces us as trade unionists. The motion put down by BATU on which I seek your support, suggests a means for meeting this challenge. The strategy we are advocating is multi-faceted. We must campaign rigorously and consistently at every level of this movement and of

this society to protect the rights of immigrant workers, as being not just in their interests, but in our interests as well. The plight of immigrant workers must have top priority on the agenda for any partnership negotiations with government and employers. For the scale and location of much of the exploitation clearly show that state funding is fuelling many of the projects using immigrant workers, especially in the building industry and in the implementation of the National Development Plan.

Furthermore, immigrant workers are now a crucial part of the workforce in the private sector across all areas of economic activity. This is not something happening at the margins, this is now part of the mainstream of working life in the Republic and I imagine in Northern Ireland as well. The Irish Trade Union Movement must give migrant workers a voice. We must represent their interests and protect their fundamental rights to fair pay and conditions of employment and to basic human rights.

Let's face it delegates, the years of the Celtic Tiger have not been very good for the trade union movement at least in the Private Sector, where by one means or another the relevance of our movement to modern Ireland has often been questioned by so-called opinion makers. It is therefore ironic that the 21st Century should present us with a challenge that is as basic and fundamental as any in our history. One that is as relevant and as central to working life in this country as those battles taken on by the trade union movement 100 years ago and more. We have a duty and obligation to take up this challenge and meet it head on. We must ensure that the rights and working conditions and treatment of immigrant workers to this country is an essential part of the Congress agenda in the years ahead.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Paddy. Do we have a seconder? Formally seconded.

Moving onto Motion 4 from Belfast and District Trades Council.

Kevin Doherty, Belfast and District Trades Council

President, Conference, Kevin Doherty, Belfast Trades Council.

Two weeks ago the President of the Trades Council was contacted by a colleague who had met five Hungarian workers in a desperate state. They had been recruited by an agent in Hungary to come and work for a company in Lisburn. After working for 11 months they were given one week's pay and dismissed without reason. The employer who held their work permits left them unemployed and homeless as they were evicted from their homes because the employer owned it. They were left of no idea what to do.

When my colleague spoke to these workers they informed him that this was not the first time that this employer had behaved in this way. It appears that it was normal practice for this company to employ migrant workers for 11 months and then dismiss them before they were entitled to employment rights. Unfortunately this is not a one-off rogue employer.

How many here remember the name Oksana Sukonova? She was the 23 year old Ukrainian girl brought here from outside the EU on a work permit held by her employer. She was made homeless when her employer laid her off. She was found lying in the street in Coleraine at Christmas and had to get both her legs amputated due to frostbite. This employer insisted that they had done nothing wrong, that they had acted within the law. Maybe they had acted within the law, but they certainly did not act with any morality or any human decency. Then we have the well-publicised GAMA case, and the list goes on.

Conference, the purpose of this motion is to call on Congress to give a lead on a campaign to protect migrant workers from unscrupulous employers to help establish a network of support and advice, and to campaign for better legislative protection for migrant workers. Urgent attention must be given to the issue of the work permit being held by the employer and not the employee as, under this system, the worker is little more than a bonded slave. They cannot change jobs and if they are dismissed they lose everything.

The other aspect of our motion addresses how Congress and the movement can help to combat racism and racist attitudes in the workplace and the wider community. It would appear from the Congress report that our colleagues South of the border may be ahead of us in the North on this issue. If this is the case we congratulate you, but clearly there is more to be done. We must ensure that structures are developed to allow us to share experiences and to learn from each other. The experience of Counteract, a trade union project, could be of great value.

Ireland is becoming increasingly diverse and multicultural. Settled ethnic minorities and migrant workers fill gaps in the labour market and bring skills which contribute greatly to our economies in food processing, agriculture, medicine, but also in manufacturing, software engineering and the tourist and service sector.

Despite the fact that the people of this island have a long history in seeking work in other countries, and as a result have been the victims of racism and discrimination, we do not appear to be as tolerant of the newcomers as we should be. While Northern Ireland is commonly portrayed as a society dominated by the tensions between Protestant and Catholic communities, high levels of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance are currently being directed at ethnic minorities.

As Jim McKeown mentioned, in the last year for example, the PSNI reported that the number of racist incidents had doubled. More worryingly though is the involvement of paramilitary elements in these attacks. A recent racial attitude survey suggests racial prejudice is around twice as significant as sectarian prejudice in the attitudes of the population of Northern Ireland. For example, twice as many responses in the survey stated that they would be more unwilling to accept or mix with members of ethnic minority communities than they would be to accept or mix with members of other main religious traditions other than themselves. This situation is worsened by politicians - including government ministers both in Britain and Ireland - raising fears over asylum seekers and using emotive language such as “swamping”, to get votes. The media must also share in this criticism for helping to stoke up feelings against migrant workers and consequently racism.

It is important briefly to look at the figures here. The Home Office statistics indicate that there were only 165 applications from asylum seekers in Northern Ireland last year. We have 60 ethnic minorities that make up the ethnic minority community of around 25,000 people. Home Office records again indicate that there were only 3,800 legal migrant workers in 2004. By way of contrast the number of people leaving Northern Ireland has been over 10,000 for the past number of years. We are not being swamped Conference. I urge you to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thanks you Kevin.

Paddy Mackell, NIPSA

President, Brothers and Sisters, Paddy Mackell, NIPSA, to second Motion No. 4, proposed by Belfast Trades Council.

Conference it is entirely appropriate that the issue of migrant workers has been placed at the top of the agenda for this week's Conference. The issue of migrant workers is a key challenge which faces our society. How we deal with the difficulties faced by migrant workers can be used as a barometer of how we can

be trusted to deal with the other issues of equality for workers. Throughout this island migrant workers have contributed to the growth of the Irish economy. They have added a welcome dimension to our insular society, unfortunately throughout this island migrant workers have also had to face the challenge of a growing rate of racist attacks and verbal abuse by Irish workers and Irish government ministers.

In the North, we have had a sad history of sectarianism as we know. We have now added racism to the list of reasons to why it is okay to fear others, to hate difference, and to intimidate those who are not like us. *Cead mile failte* only seems now to extend to those who come to our shores with a return flight ticket and an intention to leave again quickly.

This motion calls on Conference to initiate a cross-sectoral campaign to combat these attacks. It also seeks the introduction of workplace practices which take account of the needs of migrant workers to ensure that our training mechanisms recognise those changes within the workplace, where migrant workers can be openly embraced as our brothers and sisters, with the same needs, the same visions, the same concerns and the same rights as all of us.

Conference it is not enough to shake our heads and tut tut when we hear the plights of migrant workers, whether that be the GAMA workers, the Irish Ferry workers, or the young woman who had her legs amputated at Christmas time because she was left to die in the cold alone because she had lost her right to accommodation when she lost her job.

Take a look at the person next to you in the row. Does this movement reflect the changing face of Irish workplaces North and South? We have to reach out to migrant workers and stand shoulder to shoulder with them through collective action. We the trade union movement are in a key position. Our proud history of fighting for workers rights must now extend to fighting for migrant worker rights also. We must add our voice to their voice so that that voice can be heard. Their plight is our plight. Their fight is our fight. Support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Paddy. Moving to Motion No. 5 in the name of the TEEU.

Owen Wills, TEEU

President, delegates, Owen Wills TEEU moving Motion 5. The motion calls on the Executive Council to demand from Government in any future talks, the elimination of the current work permit arrangements where the employer controls

the permit, and thereby the worker as against the individual work permit system that operates in many other countries.

The TEEU raised this issue six years ago at Conference as one of the fundamental and key steps to remove migrant workers from the grasp of unscrupulous employers who hold them in that form of bonded labour. We still believe this to be a key component in any review of the rights of migrant workers. We now know without doubt that when the Tanaiste Mary Harney introduced the current system, it was not to protect the migrant workers, but to create an environment of competition particularly in the construction industry or as her colleague in government, Minister McDowell said, "poverty and low pay are necessary ingredients for competition in a free market society." We don't agree with that I think.

Delegates, we are faced with a government that talks about moving Ireland Plc up the value-chain by creating a high-tech economy with good pay and conditions. Yet their actions continue to undermine the hard won standards and conditions of workers, even those covered under registered employment agreements. Should you have any doubt, watch how fast they will push through the proposed Bolkenstein Directive, or the Services Directive in the EU. The same politicians feign concern and disgust at the Gamma revelations. Has anything changed – I don't think so.

Finally delegates, we have seven motions on migrant workers before the Conference which shows a growing awareness of how vital this issue is for Congress. It has to be given the highest priority in any future talks with government. As a matter of fact this is such an important matter of basic human rights that any engagement with government on pay should not proceed without a resolution of the issue surrounding migrant workers. Conference, the issue surrounding migrant workers that needs to be dealt with in the context of any discussions with government has to have the implementation of a work permit system that's individual based and not based with the employer. There have to be clear changes to legislation that takes with it strict and heavy penalties for non-compliance and the burden of proof moved from the employee to the employer, in any future legislation.

We also need to have the issue of public procurement and a Code of Practice in the use of workers and the conditions of employment, and the same in all public contracts. We obviously need to have an increase in the inspectorate and manpower required to drive home these issues for the migrant workers. Conference we've heard the word Ombudsman mentioned in lots of areas, whether it's insurance or pensions, maybe we've reached a stage where we need an Ombudsman in this country to oversee and protect the rights of migrant workers. It might give them some protection from these unscrupulous employers.

I move.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Have we a seconder?

Formally seconded.

Dooley Harte Craigavon Trades Council

From Craigavon Trades Council to move motion number 6. Conference a lot of the previous speakers have listed a multitude of issues surrounding the problems faced by migrant labour and they are in our thoughts on how best to take these problems towards some sort of resolution. For our part, the Craigavon Trades Council fully supports these initiatives. However we see the ratification of the UN Convention on Migrant Rights and the implementation of core ILO standards as a means for government to show its intention to support migrant workers. As we understand it, neither the British or Irish governments have signed up to the UN Convention on Migrant Rights.

Conference this Convention will not end all the prejudices in our society. It will not eradicate self-serving capitalists who will exploit and abuse migrant labour, but at least it will afford migrant workers some level of international protection. The Convention itself is very complex, but it does set out the rights that migrant labour would be entitled to. Article 14 states that no migrant workers shall be subject to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy. Article 25 states that migrant workers shall have equality of treatment in respect of salaries, in conditions of work and terms and conditions such as overtime, health and safety and holidays. Article 26 recognises the rights of migrant workers to trade union membership and trade union representation.

Also Conference the preamble to the ILO Constitution recognises that true peace across the world can only be achieved through social justice. At the 1970 International Labour Conference, the rights of trade union membership and collective bargaining were reinforced, and these have been reinstated on many occasions since. However Conference given all of this we are all aware that as soon as some migrant workers mention trade unions to employers or recruitment agencies they are thrown out of their jobs, their housing, or just forced back to their home nations.

Conference, we still have a job of work to do to convince the public, to convince politicians, and to convince employers that there are difficulties out there. Certainly, statistics with regard to the number of migrant workers in the Island of Ireland have been given previously so I'll not reiterate those. Conference these

are fellow workers who contribute to our economy, our lives and our social fabric. They deserve no less than the rest of us with regard to employment, wages, housing and security. It is to the shame of our governments that they have failed migrant labour and therefore they have failed us. Migrant workers have put substantially more money into our economies through their taxes than they have taken out. We therefore call on the ICTU to make our members, our politicians and our civil leaders aware of the need to protect this resource and not to abuse it. We therefore call for the ratification of the Convention into British and Irish legislation now, to protect all workers, and if the President will indulge me, although not mentioned in the motion we would also ask the Executive Committee to give some consideration to the issue of the illicit trade of human trafficking that is causing further exploitation. Please support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Secunder? Mel.

Mel Corey, ATGWU

President, Conference, Mel Corry, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union seconding the motion on behalf of Craigavon Trades Council.

It has already been stated colleagues, that the cause of migrant workers is the cause of all workers and that a win for one is a win for all. In my area of mid-Ulster we have the highest concentration of migrant labour in Northern Ireland. Ten per cent of the population of Dungannon is now made up the Portuguese community and it has greatly enriched the whole mid-Ulster area. My own union has been very active along with community organisations like the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme, Craigavon Council of Trade Unions and others in tackling the issues affecting migrant workers. Our workers' rights clinics based in Portadown and Dungannon are inundated with horror stories of gross exploitation and abuse of migrant workers and by those who profit from the trading of labour.

Colleagues you've heard it all before, and I don't intent to repeat the examples. The movement must be applauded for the great work it has done to date in support of migrant labour both North and South. However we are putting a finger in a burst dam. We must put pressure on all those in society who have a role to play, to play their part.

Conference we should welcome the appointment of Professor of Monica McWilliams as the new Head of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and we should campaign for any new Bill of Rights to include protections for migrant labour. These protections are protections for all workers. Counteract,

the movement's own unit, is best placed to deliver our agenda and I along with other associates of Counteract are currently working to reinvigorate the organisation and put it at the forefront of this battle. As events of the weekend have shown us, sectarianism has not gone away you know. Racism and sectarianism are two sides of the same coin. We must continue to give the brave lead we have always done in the past. Please support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. We are now moving into speakers on motions one to six in the common debate, so whenever you go to the platform, identify yourself and identify which specific motion you are going to speak to, and it's three minutes.

Mike Jennings, SIPTU

Thank you Chairman. Mike Jennings from SIPTU and I'm speaking to the Executive Report and all six motions if I may.

I want to firstly say that it is something that we should really welcome the fact that we have six motions on the question of migrant workers and it's the biggest single issue on our agenda. I think it shows just how important and how mainstreamed this issue has become for the trade union movement. Now much reference has been made, and probably will be by the other speakers to the Gama scandal and how that drew attention to the problem and I think we should in passing bear in mind the role that Mary Harney played in bringing that company specifically to this country, with the secondary objective, and maybe for her, the primary objective of breaking trade union rates of pay and conditions in the construction industry.

But I think, I only have three minutes so you can applaud at the end, I think we should not make the mistake with Gama of thinking that its' foreign companies that do this. Most of the exploitation takes place by the same gombeen class that has exploited Irish workers and vulnerable people forever. They are mostly Irish exploiters and we shouldn't forget that.

My own union is dealing with a number of sample cases. We have workers from the Czech Republic who got no wages at all for three weeks and then when they came to the union and complained they were given a cheque drawn on a different company which bounced immediately and it was obviously known that it would bounce.

We had a group of Polish workers who were sacked immediately they drew the employer's attention to the fact that they were paying no tax or PRSI. That

employer obviously felt so secure that he was free from inspection or prosecution that he gave them a written contract, and the written contract said that they would work 60 hours for a flat rate of €7 per hour. It's against the minimum wage, not to mention the Construction Industry wage. There was no pension, no sick pay, no overtime payment and this employer issued forged Safe Pass Certificates.

Our issue has to be implementation of existing rights and I would draw Conference's attention to the resolution on Thursday from the Dublin Council of Trade Unions on the Labour Inspectorate, and I will confine any remarks to that debate, but it's absolutely important that we implement the current rights.

But one thing we should say to anybody who cares about the rights of migrant workers. There is one small device which any migrant worker can have which is a guaranteed protection against exploitation, and that's a trade union card, because 95% of the exploitation of migrant workers takes place where there is no trade union. Statistics will show you that a migrant worker has ten times the chance of having his exploitation rectified in a hearing or a tribunal if he is represented by a trade union. The lesson is obvious, we have got to organise these workers. My own union we calculated we have approximately 11,000 migrant workers, international workers and we have developed links with *Solidarnosc*, the Polish Trade Union.

I will finish on this Chairman. This is the 90th anniversary of probably one of the most famous migrant workers of all time. A man by the name of Joel Emmanuel Hagglund left Sweden as a penniless migrant to come to the United States. When he was murdered 90 years ago by the corporate bosses, his name had changed from Joseph Hillstrom to Joe Hill. Joe Hill's legacy was: "Don't mourn, organise." That's the secret, that's the challenge.

Brendan Archbold, Mandate

President, Brendan Archbold, Mandate. I will be very brief because I just want to express Mandate's solidarity with those unions who have submitted motions on migrant workers and on anti-racism in general, and just to associate the union if I may with the comments made by the General Secretary and the President in their opening addresses in relation to migrant workers.

As the President said he welcomes migrant workers and I think it's very important that we emphasise that. This is not an exercise in tolerance, this is an exercise in positively welcoming people to this country as migrant workers. I think it is in all our interests that we do not tolerate the creation of a new pool of cheap labour made up by migrant workers. I submit to Conference that we tolerated it far too long in relation to women and we must not do it in relation to migrant workers. It makes absolute sense I think that we tackle the issues raised in motions one to six centrally and I look forward to Congress' continued lead in that area.

Thank you very much President.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker. Can I just remind the speakers here that if you are looking at the Order of Business that we have two guest speakers, so we may not conclude all of the business here on migrant workers, but we are earmarked on the Order of Business to come back again to take up this debate at 4.15pm, but we will go on until twenty past and we will be calling our two guest speakers. Okay? Go ahead.

Anton McCabe, SIPTU

President, delegates, I just have a number of case studies that we are dealing with at the moment, and if I could just ask you to picture the scene. It's Saturday night at a bar in rural Ireland and everybody is having the craic and availing of the late bar. In this bar are some local farmers – and I'm not generalising about farmers, I have to say that – but they were discussing things that farmers discuss. It was getting late so one farmer was getting ready to go home and he said to another farmer "surely you have to go home too you have to do the milking in the morning." And the farmer said "milking on a Sunday morning, he said, are you mad?" He said "I have a young Ukrainian slave to do that for me. Bringing them workers into this country was the best thing ever happened. You should get yourself one," he said to the farmer. That 'young slave', Ivan I'll call him, from the Ukraine contacted me a few weeks later, along with a gentleman who was in the bar that night and his problems were the usual. He was working up to 65 hours a week for €210. No holiday pay, paying €50 rent to the farmer for the use of a room in his house. I spent some time with Ivan and explained how the trade unions could pursue his claim and get him some form of a reconciliation to his situation, and also told him that we could possibly assist him to get a work permit if he could identify another boss. But Ivan went on his way and a number of days later he contacted me to tell me that he didn't want to pursue his claim, or his case against his employer, because he spoke to his father in the Ukraine who was a church leader there, and told Ivan "this is your destiny in life, there is a greater Man up there who will deal with this employer at the end of his day."

Delegates we are all creatures of destiny and we all have our own way of solving our problems, but this was Ivan's way.

I would also like to tell you about how some employers are abusing the training element of the Minimum Wage. Yannis is this young guy's name, from Lithuania.

He came here to work with a Greyhound Trainer. His duties were to clean out the kennels and walk the dogs, a simple task you might say, but his boss didn't think so. He was paying him €5 an hour and as a perk he could work for 4 hours on Sunday for €20. Eleven months later he was still on that wage. When the boss was questioned about this he, he said he had not perfected the art of walking a dog. He was strutting and not walking and was affecting the carriage of the dog.

Another situation was, two guys from the Ukraine who were working on a potato grading farm and it took them fifteen months to find out the difference between a big spud, a small spud and a medium one.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

All right colleague.

Anton McCabe, SIPTU Anti-Racism Group

Okay. This employer said he was breaking no laws because he was paying them the training element of the minimum wage. Just to finish delegates, on my way to Conference this morning at the Bar Library I saw a sign which read 'The price of liberty is eternal vigilance' and I think that's the message we should bring from Conference regarding our migrant workers.

Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, President

Thanks speaker.

Joe Moore, CWU

President, Conference, Joe Moore, Communication Workers' Union. First of all I would like to indicate the Communication Workers' support for the six motions on migrant workers and just to take a few minutes to deal with the issue of asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers, those that arrive in the Republic of Ireland, are denied the right to work. They are provided with direct provision, in other words they are kept in hostel-type accommodation with no differentiation made for racial background, language, culture etc, and they are given the princely sum of €19.10 a week on

which to survive. Now looking at the Executive Council Report, page 11, it states, that: "At current rates of economic growth, immigration into the Republic of Ireland of the order of 50,000-60,000 each year is necessary." I think what the Trade Union Movement should be calling for immediately is for the right of all asylum seekers to work and at the current rate of asylum seekers, that would only be about 10% of what is needed.

In relation to the issue of amnesty, I feel that we should be calling for an amnesty for all asylum seekers, and I think that despite the result of last year's referendum, the mood out there is in support of this type of initiative. When you look at the Olunkunle Elunkanlo case, it was the reaction of his fellow school colleagues in Palmerstown Community College that led to Michael McDowell having to back down and to bring this young student back from Nigeria.

You had the case of the two Nigerian women in Athlone separated from their families and deported, and yet the local community out there was able to mobilise in support of their repatriation, so I think, just to conclude that the trade union movement should be looking for the right to work for asylum seekers, and amnesty for all people living in the country currently and an end to the current system of deportation. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker. Just on the issue, this is the last speaker we can take then we have to move onto the invited guests.

Gareth Fitzpatrick, ATGWU

Speaking in support of motion 5. In supporting this motion I would like to remind Conference of the recent Gama scandal. Gama workers were exploited, abused, discriminated against and victimised while they were members of our biggest affiliate. Despite public exposure of this scandal in 2001 our movement did nothing for these workers until Joe O'Higgins TD put his own head on the block for these people. Only then did we react, only then did we march, only then did we support. In supporting this motion let us hope that we learn from our neglect of these workers and become more effective in protecting immigrants coming to our country to work, moving forward.

Armie Soresso, UNISON

Supporting motions 1-6 on migrant workers. President, fellow delegates I am what you would call a flesh and blood example of what you are trying to talk about – migrant workers. Since 2001 I have been here as a filler of the

Government or so-called short-term solution of Government in terms of the shortage of nurses in Northern Ireland and the whole United Kingdom. I have actually personally experienced racism, different aspects. As a person I would say that for me racism is actually more of a colour and an appearance than an origin because that's what you basically have an impression of. I think that racism can be experienced work, institution, political organisations and appallingly from the community of whom we are supposed to be serving. So as an example of employment racism that we have been experiencing from before up to now is adaptation placements are solely controlled by recruiters and employers and there is no clear and standardised formulated adaptation programme or induction procedures, therefore increasing our vulnerability in terms of our situation. Working visas and work contracts are controlled solely by the government as well and the employer, and until now most of us are still regarded as contractals and permanent residencies – most of us have been here for nearly 5 years and we have applied for residencies and some of us have been denied due to claims on child benefit which I think is very, very unfair. So I think the message here that I want to give here is that we are welcoming the appreciation that this trade union Conference has been giving migrant workers, and I think the government should be giving us more than they are offering us in return. I think the greatest challenge for us at the moment is how to spring forward from all these Conferences and maybe good practice agreements, and translate into legislation, and at the same time implement it, and getting it adapted to the government agencies. I think at this moment in time I am facing you as a masked person, not even a person, but as a worker, and we seek partnership as well, and until that time we seek to be dealt with as individuals and as people.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Just on the basis that we have three more speakers here, I'm sorry we're going to have to come back again in the afternoon. Nothing personal Mick or anything else. All right Pamela.

Can I introduce our next speaker, and in talking about immigrants the name Frances O'Grady, representing the British TUC, shows that the people who left this island, if they had been given the opportunity to stay we may have been further on from where we are at present time, but it also shows that when our immigrants went abroad and they were given the opportunity they showed exactly what they could do, and Frances I think is a clear demonstration of that. Frances.

**Address to Conference - Frances O'Grady,
Deputy General Secretary, TUC**

Well thank you very much President, Delegates and I know the General Secretary will be back in a minute. It really is a great honour to bring solidarity and greetings from the British Trade Union Movement and I think as Brendan said if you went through the names on the TUC General Council you would see quite a number now, and perhaps a growing number of Irish ancestry, so perhaps that project is nearly complete. In fact when David was talking earlier my granddad was of that generation of 1950s building workers coming over from Dublin to Coventry mainly, building the sort of buildings I have to say that the people of Coventry were not entirely grateful for at the time as it turns out. But I think it's worth remembering that of course he came across the water because he had to, but that he also saw himself, and this is true of many migrant workers as well, saw himself as bringing a vibrant brand of trade unionism to British workers too, so we need to remember that people often had their own traditions that they bring and enrich our trade union movements with. All the more reason to organise.

Usually I'm introduced I'm described as the first woman Deputy General Secretary of the TUC of 135 years, and it has to be said that when it comes to women, the British Trade Union Movement doesn't like to rush things. But increasingly we need to change, because the workforce is changing, more women, more part-time workers, more agency workers, more students working, more service jobs, and the world including Europe is changing too. As we have already heard the neoliberals are on the offensive, boardroom greed on the rise, and multinational corporations demanding ever more freedom to chase the best tax advantage and the worst wages anywhere in the world. So, despite relatively high employment in both our islands it is no wonder that millions of workers still feel so insecure. As trade unionists we are going to have to strengthen our arguments and sharpen our bargaining and organising strategies, building solidarity between working people beyond national borders.

Like you, we are making improvements in the quality of working life our priority. Too often workers are treated, at best as human resources, when what we want is to be treated as human beings. And there have been real gains won by unions, more holidays, better family friendly rights, minimum pay protection, and in the UK the right to a union voice at work. But too many workers still feel trapped in low paid, low skilled, long hours, boring and repetitive jobs. As the old Marx Brothers joke used to go 'if work was so great the rich would keep it for themselves'.

As the new Labour Government takes the presidencies of both the G8 and the EU we find ourselves at a crossroads. Will we take the high road, combining economic success with social justice, or the low road – unfettered free markets,

workers expected to work longer and harder for less pay and precious few pensions. We all face real challenges ahead. Manufacturing – in the UK we are loosing 10,000 jobs, many of them unionised jobs, every month. So-called reform of public services, and I have to say we could do without some of the lectures we've received from Digby Jones, because when it comes to treatment of workers it's time to modernise the private sector too. And pensions, no more disgraceful spectacle than the rich and powerful arguing for the state pension age to go up in the full knowledge that many, many low paid manual workers would never live long enough to claim it and that one in four women spend old age in poverty.

And of course the social wage, increasingly childcare, health, education, affordable housing – these are all vital too. I listened to your debate on migrant workers and I want to salute your support to the Phillipino workers on Irish Ferries to the Turkish workers at Gama and all migrant workers. In the UK the tragic deaths of Chinese workers at Morecambe Bay sent shock waves through the country, yet during the General Election it wasn't just the fascist BNP that played on people's fears, we saw a direct link between politicians uttering words, sensationalist coverage in parts of the tabloid press, and real incidents of physical assaults and racists attacks on migrant workers. The trade union movement is proud to have a different message, and that message is migrant workers aren't the enemy, exploitation is.

Whether it's cleaners at the city banks on Canary Wharf, or workers in the private nursing homes, or agricultural and food production workers in the countryside, the best way to beat exploitation is through strong union organisation. Both of our movements share the belief that organising has to be the number one. A little bit more listening, a little less lecturing. Showing leadership by putting our money where our mouth is, investing hard cash into workplace reps, organisers and organising campaigns. There are real opportunities to reach out to a new generation of workers whose aspirations are higher than ever before. Men and women, black and white, young and old.

And I just want to end by saying that as we mobilise for the G8 in Gleneagles, yes, let's work together to make poverty history. But let's make private greed, inequality and exploitation history too, but respect dignity and justice at work for all workers everywhere. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Frances, I think if you could play football you'd be on the Irish Team. Ah Peter, she wouldn't play for Manchester United, don't worry about it.

Our next speaker is Barbara Ehrenreich, she's a best selling author and widely published journalist. Barbara has been described as a premier reporter on the underside of US capitalism. Her latest book *Nickel and Dimed* is a powerful expose of the low pay, poor living economy of the United States. I'd like to welcome Barbara on behalf of Congress and delegates to BDC 2005 as a guest speaker.

Address to Conference - Barbara Ehrenreich

Thank you very much, it's a great honour to be invited to participate in this Conference. I would also mention that it's a great pleasure for me to return to the home of many of my ancestors. I know Ehrenreich is not an Irish name, but I'll explain that later.

Brendan Mackin, President

That was a surprise.

Barbara Ehrenreich

I hate to be the bearer of grim news, but that is my job here today as an American. Because America has become a case study in what happens when the unions grow weak and the working class lets down its guard. What we are up against in the United States today is an all-out assault on the poor, the working class, the middle class, and it's an assault that's coming from the public sector as well as the private sector.

One of the first big blows that caught my attention was welfare reform in 1996, which was legislation that ended poor, single mothers' entitlement to any kind of cash support from the government. This was achieved by a really vicious attack on welfare recipients as lazy, promiscuous, drug-addicted, overweight, whatever, women. This was based on the Conservative theory of poverty which is that it is a character defect.

I have another theory about poverty, and that is that it's a shortage of money, I'm trying to push that idea in the United States – but it's not easy. Anyway under the new regime everyone has to get a job even if she has a job, even if she has a chronic illness, even if she has no childcare for her children, and the promise was

that if all these poor women, 4 million plus their 8 million children, if these women would get jobs then their poverty would be cured.

Incidentally the Bush administration has added it's own twist to welfare reform which I feel I should mention. They have a new solution to poverty for women, and that is marriage. I don't know if any women here have tried that, it would work actually if the government would draft CEOs to marry very poor women. I don't want to encourage that plan because those CEOs even the ones who are not in prison are not all exactly marriage material. There is a very practical problem with this new emphasis on marriage, which I think reveals something else about the American situation, most women do end up marrying men of their own social class, so if you are a very poor woman, or have been on and off, you are probably looking at a blue collar guy. And blue collar men are a group that have seen their wages just nosedive in the United States in the last two or three decades. So I once sat down to calculate how many blue collar men a woman has to marry to lift her out of poverty, and her family. Actually the number turns out to be a little over two which is, strangely enough, still illegal.

The main emphasis is on jobs, every poor woman has to go out and get a job, again the question should be how many jobs? In 1998 which was boomtime in America I started just observing the wages offered in my local newspaper on Help Wanted pages, and then turning to the real estate pages and seeing what the rents were for apartments. The maths did not look good to me.

And that's what eventually inspired me to set out on a journalistic project to see whether I could support myself, just one person, on what I could earn as an entry-level worker just going out into the workforce. Between 1998 and 2000 I worked in three different cities, I was a waitress, a hotel housekeeper, a maid with a housecleaning services, a nursing home aid, and a Walmart associate. There are no employees in America anymore, everyone is an 'associate' or a 'team member'. I averaged \$7 an hour which is incidentally the average wage of women who have come off of welfare since 1996. This was hard work, all these jobs were hard, and I would mention that they were not only hard physically, which I was expecting, but they were also hard mentally. I've written books, I've a PhD – I had a hard time learning every job, and I wasn't that great at it. And I felt I learned a very important thing, and very humbling sort of lesson – and that is I will never use the word 'unskilled' again to describe anybody's work. All work takes skill and intelligence and a great deal of concentration, and deserves our respect.

Now I want to add though that the jobs that I held were a lot harder than they needed to be, due to the attitudes of management. There were strange rules, for example, one job I had which was actually the sweatiest, most calorie burning job, which was the maid job, we had a rule that we could not drink water. No liquid was to touch our lips when we were working inside a house even if that might be for hours of heavy labour. Rules, and I encountered this twice, of no

talking to your fellow employees. Now think about the implications of that. For one thing it sure means that you're not going to unionise, you're not going to get together. And then the routine padding of the working day with unpaid minutes - up to 45 minutes on one job I had a day, these minutes were not paid at all they represent sheer volunteer labour on the part of the workers.

I did not see the worst of it. There are ways, and I'm not exaggerating here, I wouldn't exaggerate on this point, in which US workplaces are beginning to offer the kind of conditions associated with third world sweat shops. First for example, the matter of bathroom breaks. I was so naïve when I went into this project, that I thought bathroom breaks were a human right. Sometimes they are so rare, in some of the jobs I had the breaks were so rare, I began to look back at that pre-employment drug test with nostalgia because that could be your last chance for many months.

There is a professor at the University of Iowa who has written a book on bathroom breaks in the United States, the title is interesting it's called 'Void Where Prohibited'. There are situations he reports on some assembly lines and for cashiers, women who stand in one place for a long time, where bathroom breaks are so rare that these women have taken to wearing adult diapers to work.

Or for real sweatshop conditions look at Walmart. Walmart is the largest private employer in the United States and also Mexico, it's the largest corporation in the world. It has a habit of keeping it's people over time, sometimes even locking them into stores to prevent their egress when their shift is over. The way it works is a manager will come up to you when you're working on the floor and say 'hey go punch out, I've got a lot of work for you to do'. In other words the paid part of your day is over, from now on you are contributing free labour to the corporation. And then there are allegations of workers being locked into stores overnight regardless of when the shift ends, regardless of health emergencies these people may experience.

Now I should emphasise since the theme this morning has been migrant workers, that these conditions I am describing have nothing to do with the presence of immigrant workers. At Walmart for instance, the sales force I encountered was almost entirely native born, and in fact they have to be English speaking to be in retail sales. The problem is not immigration it is the greed of the employers.

Now I survived my different jobs but I failed at my larger goal which was to make ends meet and the big problem for me was rents, and I think that's a problem you can understand in all parts of Ireland today. I found rents consistently above \$500 a month, and in some cases that was for a single room without even a fridge or a microwave in it. And if you want to see your expenses go up fast, it's when you have to depend on the little gas station convenience store, or a fast

food restaurant for all your meals. I can't imagine how I would have done this if I had children with me to take care of as well as support. I tried to get my kids to come with me but I don't know what it is, at a certain age they don't want to go live with mom in trailer parks as part of a weird journalistic experience. I have no idea how you would do it with children. Just think of the math here. \$7 an hour amounts to \$1,200 a month – let's not take out any money for taxes here. If rent is \$500 a month, and that's pretty conservative, childcare costs are minimally going to be about \$500 a month, in other words you are going to be in negative numbers probably, with utilities and transportation before you've even bought groceries – it's not possible.

Now how do people get by? Well one strategy is you live with other people who are sharing the rent with you. This could be grown children, a spouse, a boyfriend, or the people you just met at work and I was surprised at how often these were very ad-hoc relationships. Recent immigrants I met, Eastern Europeans and people from the Caribbean, squeezed into tiny apartments or, in the case of some Czechoslovakian workers I met, lived in dormitories where one man would sleep in a bed which would then be occupied by another man while the first man worked his shift.

And of course Americans work more than one job. There has been a 90% increase since 1973 in the number of people working more than one job, and I tried that too. I did meet a lot of people though who are not making it by any stretch of the imagination. I worked alongside women for example who are homeless. The really depressing thing here is not that they were homeless, but that they did not consider themselves to be homeless, because there is so much homelessness in America now, that if you have a vehicle to sleep in you don't call yourself homeless. You're not on the street right? Now these women I'm taking about were full time workers, native born, English speaking women. I worked alongside people who were not getting enough to eat. This was actually in the housecleaning job, again native born, in this case white, English speaking workers. I was so naïve that when I first saw fellow workers skipping lunch or just having a small bag of Doritos I thought they were dieting, well I learned more – they did not have any money and they had very little food at home.

Now one thing that became very clear to me is how meaningless the official poverty line is in the United States. According to that official Federal Government measure of poverty, I wasn't poor when I was earning \$7 an hour, I was just fine. Officially only 12.5% of Americans are poor, but that definition is 40 years old, is based on the cost of food, it does not take into account the huge inflation in housing costs, and in medical care.

How many Americans are really poor? Well independent estimates are coming in now at about 25%. And I should mention that there has been a rise in poverty every year for the past three years, especially among single mothers and their children. So much for the success of welfare reform.

Now I want to say a little bit about the public sector here. I don't think the welfare reformers were ever really interested in the plight of poor women and their children. Welfare was peanuts compared to their real target, which was the public pension plan called Social Security for the elderly, and all of the other really big parts of the welfare state. In fact I expect now that any day we are going to start seeing the stereotypes of elderly people that we used against welfare recipients in the early 90s, they're lazy, right? A lot of them don't even work, they lounge around, they play cards. I'm sure the Bush Administration will soon reveal that some of these seniors are cashing in their social security cheques for vodka and Viagra. I cannot explain the administration's zeal for privatising social security. It's not a popular issue. In fact they may fail on this, especially as private pensions become a thing of the past. And of course, most respectable economists agree that there is no crisis facing the US public pension or social security system, but then of course there weren't any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq either.

Now add to this another blow to working people, the Bankruptcy Bill which the President just signed into law, which takes away the possibility of a fresh start for debtors, especially those who are poor or in the working class and won't have access to the little loopholes that have been created for the rich. Why do people in America fall into bankruptcy? Because they go on shopping sprees on 5th Avenue, because they buy too many Lexus's or Rolexes? No, a Harvard study just released shows that over 50% of bankruptcies in America are caused by medical bills. Now this is a terrifying result I think, because it shows that the healthcare system in the United States, despite the best efforts of so many dedicated healthcare workers has become a health hazard. It is pushing people into poverty and poverty of course is a major risk factor for disease.

Now the pattern I'm taking about – we've seen welfare reform, we've seen social security, privatization, the Bankruptcy Bill, the crushing burden of medical costs, especially for the 45 million Americans who have no medical insurance – there is a pattern here, and the pattern I see is one of an attack, a concerted attack, on the poor and the middle class in every possible way. Now it's not new of course in some ways, and it didn't begin with welfare reform. For the last two decades there's been a continuing decline in decent paying manufacturing jobs, jobs in steel for example, replaced by jobs at Walmart, declining union membership, until today only 8% of the private sector workers are unionised, and declining hourly wages. There was a brief time when hourly wages went up in the late 90s with the rest of the economic boom, but that was the end of that.

The result is that we have become an America, as the economists put it, a highly polarised society, with a gap between the rich and the poor, even between the upper middle class and everyone else growing relentlessly. One tiny little indication of this trend is that every Christmas season – that's a big season for retail right? – and there is anxious anticipation about whether it will be a good

season, and the last few years it has been a disaster in the discount stores, including Walmart, where low income people shop, while as at places like luxury stores like Saks 5th Avenue, the luxury goods just leap off the shelves at Christmas time.

We have become a society divided into the gated communities for the wealthy on the one hand and the trailer parks and the tenements on the other hand. Now in the face of this rising inequality and poverty, what has been the Bush Administration's economic domestic policy? Well the main thing has been tax cuts for the rich, for that 1% of the population that earns over \$200,000 a year. And how is Bush planning to finance the double cost of the war in Iraq, plus tax cuts for the rich? Well with cuts in all social spending for the poor, the elderly, and children. Childcare subsidies, heating oil subsidies, even veteran's benefits are being cut in the 06 Budget. The trouble is you could eliminate all Federal spending for the poor in the United States and it wouldn't make the slightest difference to the huge deficit we have, because in good years only 5% of that Federal Budget goes to the poor, and I defy you to find any major religion or ethical system anywhere in the world that requires the poor to give alms to the rich. But that's what we have in America. We are up against a political force which styles itself as Christian, that has the temerity to invoke Jesus while cutting services for the poor and taxes for the rich, that in fact inverts the entire Judeo-Christian ethic in the service of greed. And I should say that some of us finally, are getting sick and tired of seeing greed and cruelty and indifference to human suffering masked as Christian values, which is what has been happening.

Now for much of the last three years, America's been distracted from it's relentless assault on the poor and middle class by one thing, and that is war. How long I wonder before Americans wake up to the fact that there is a war going on right within our own country? A war against our living standards, our hopes for our children, and our deepest notions of fairness and justice.

You know what needs to be done in the States in not any big mystery - poverty and class polarisation are not natural phenomenon. These are the result of conscious policies, and those policies can be reversed. Employers for example could stop making it impossible to American workers to organise into unions, and right now it is pretty near impossible. You can be fired for anything, you can be fired for having a funny expression on your face. You can be fired for wearing the wrong tee-shirt with the wrong sports team on it, you can certainly be fired for being a 'trouble maker'.

And of course we need in America to stop the relentless decline in affordable housing. It's gotten to the point where the largest public housing project we have is the penitentiary system. We need to start doing the things that civilised nations have learned to do years ago, like instituting a universal health insurance programme for all. But for the next four years, I don't think we're going to see any changes like these at the national level. What would the Bush

Administration do about the economy if they wanted to do something about it? Bomb it? Because really that's their best tested device.

If we are going to win the class war in the United States, or at least stop, halt the steady advance of the economic and corporate elite we are going to need your help. Because if Irish people or Danish people or anybody else in the world buckle under to American wage levels and management practices, or to US style attacks on the welfare state, it just gets that much easier for ruling elites in the United States to say 'look this is just the way things are. There is no alternative, not even in Europe, nowhere. You are lucky to have what you've got.' So I ask you to stand fast and resist the race to the bottom, that American management policies, social policies and social welfare policies represent. And I ask you that not just because I care about Irish workers, which I do, but because I care about American workers. Your victories are ours, just as our victory when it comes, and it will come, is yours.

Thanks for listening, thanks for inviting me here to have an opportunity to learn from your struggles and feel the warmth of your solidarity. Thanks.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, can I ask you just to settle down. I have a few announcements for you. I would like to thank Barbara for one of the best exposes of this political and economic system that people say we should aspire to and I think the race to the bottom was clearly demonstrated by what Barbara has told us, and I think when we start talking about neoliberal agendas and neoliberalism that is it personified. And I would recommend that people would buy the book, and by the way they are discounted as well.

Can I just conclude this session of Congress by thanking all the speakers this morning. Can I also say that there is a fringe meeting on Corporate Social Responsibility here in the Waterfront Hall in Studio 1. I would also say that there is an Ex Prisoners Reintegration fringe meeting in Transport House at 1.15pm. And also just to remind people that following through from what Barbara has said about the resistance to what is being imposed upon us is that there is a Make Poverty History rally being held at 6.30pm on 30 June in Parnell Square in Dublin, and I would also recommend that you go upstairs and buy the white band and it is going to a good cause. Thank you Conference – I want you all to return here at 2.30pm and it is only for delegates only because it is a closed session, ok, so see you at 2.30pm – thank you.

Lunch Adjournment

Make Poverty History Campaign – video

Finance and Organisation

14.30 – 16.15 Private Session

(Motions 8 – 12)

(Principal EC Report reference Section 1, Chapter 4, Appendix 7

Congress Organisation and Finance)

David Begg, General Secretary

(Tape ended part missing) – I think we have made fairly good progress since then in getting our affairs in order. We have managed to get our costs under control, with the exception of the pension funds which Joe will talk about. We have introduced a very radical, really, restructuring of the staff. We have had about 20 percent staff reduction and at the same time we have been trying to not just maintain our output but to increase it. We have had some positive things in that as well in terms of the range of competencies within Congress, particularly the engagement of an economist onto the Congress staff which is an essential sort of expertise to have in terms of the work we have been doing and it has been very useful to us. We have also managed to negotiate an agreement with the Government of the Republic concerning the future of the Congress Centres. Congress Centres, I think truth be told, were looked upon for a number of years as almost an appendage to the trade union structure, but in fact we have arranged a new scheme for them which is a reorientation of their activities to take them centre stage into the role of trade union activity and to promote the linkage between them and to the Trades Councils throughout the country, so I think that we can say, although I know and I don't wish to diminish the impact of this for the Centres, that we know the change is difficult for many of them but nevertheless I think we will be able to secure their future in a very vibrant way.

We have also, as you know in our Special Conference, we promised at the Conference in Tralee to do some work, to do some fairly radical thinking about gender representation on the Executive Council of Congress and on the Northern Ireland Committee and the General Purposes Committee and we had a Special Conference last year to introduce that amendment so that the electoral system in place for this Conference would reflect the change and that had happened and that is a big change and a significant change and hopefully a very positive change in terms of gender representation in the internal structures of Congress. I would like to mention in parallel with that that we are working, have brought in and are about to operationalise a new LIFT project which is intended to provide for succession in the structures of the trade unions by enhancing the role of women and giving a real lift from the ground to try to get women more involved in trade union structures and bringing them forward as leaders within the trade

union movement. I would personally see this as a most important development and I am very hopeful that by the time my career in Congress is finished that we will have a different profile in the leadership which is much more gender-balanced.

In terms of the mechanics of our operations, we have modernised our website and we have introduced a new IT platform which is capable of linking both the Belfast and Dublin offices. We have increased the scale and quality, I think, of our publications and this has had a positive benefit in terms of the profile of Congress and in the number of enquiries which we have received externally and the number of hits on our website, and if you get the opportunity to look at pages 45 and 46 of your report, you will see the range of publications and the range of submissions that Congress has prepared in the past two years.

The Executive Council has also adopted a second strategic plan to guide the organisation over the coming three years. It is quite a detailed plan but one which gives, I think, a focus and a coherence to our work.

We have also last night, any of you who may have been involved in it, opened the new Headquarters of the Northern Ireland Committee here in Belfast. I think that is a very positive development and we had the privilege of naming it after Terry Carlin, who for so many years, was the Northern Ireland Officer of Congress.

I have to be truthful and say that resources are very meagre and that the cutting back and the paring back that we have had to do is not without its own costs, in such things as our international affiliations and the resources we have really are not sufficient I have to say for the challenge facing us in the future. I mean I don't say this to make the poor mouth or to complain or anything like that, but simply to point out that realistically the things we need to do as a trade union movement are things which cost money and we really don't have that money available at the moment. It is appropriate and right that we should be as efficient as we can be and as effective as we can be with the money but there are limits to that and I will leave it to the Treasurer to speak a little bit more about that.

But the challenges facing us in the future are really principally relating to recruitment and organising. Again at the Conference in Tralee we tried to make that the theme to try to move to a position where the movement was thinking more about its future and realising in fact that we are engaged in a war effectively against forces who want to put us out of business. And when we look at other countries, and Barbara spoke about the United States this morning and the difficulties there, while we must realise that we have to move from our position of relative strength if we are to defend our position in the future. Now there has been some success in that. I believe it is something which receives much more attention from individual unions, and individual unions are investing in it and with some success. I mean if you look at the membership we now have – we have a

membership of 770,000, I think the President in his address this morning made a very telling point about our historical role and about the way we have come, you know, when he referred to the speech by Jim Larkin here in 1949, and the 196,000 people who were affiliated to trade unions at that time. It is a story of strength and development but nevertheless it is not something to be complacent about. Now it does represent an increase in numbers of 15,000 since last year and it is against the common perception that there is that trade union membership is falling.

As a matter of fact I was at a fringe meeting at lunchtime when Minister Conor Lenihan was speaking and he was making a friendly point in his speech about the role of trade unions and he was kind of saying, 'even though trade union membership is falling'....in fact it is not falling – it is increasing, although the popular myth is that it is falling. The problem is of course that we know it is not increasing in line with the increase in the workforce generally, so union density is falling. Now, of that membership of 777,000 if you strip out from the workforce people who are self-employed and if you look at the figure of unions in the military in the police and that and unions who are not affiliated to Congress that does represent a density of 39 per cent in the Republic and 36 per cent in Northern Ireland which is, as I say, good by international standards.

But the downside of that is that there are 940,000 in the Republic and 390,000 people in Northern Ireland who are not in unions and who should be. And if you segment that number of people to look at the potential membership you can see that our estimates, and in Congress we have gone into this very deeply but 25 per cent of that total of 1.3 million are unionised employments, employments which already have unions in them but they are not in the unions so from that there is a clear gap in what we do.

If you try to look at segmenting the whole potential membership you first of all have this issue of infill recruitment and the lack of it, the fact that so many people could be in unions without any hassle at all but are not. That shows you the weakness in workplace representation. So there is a real job of work to be done there and I never cease hearing from people that, ooh, I tried to join union X but it took me three months and I applied to join but it was six weeks before anyone got back to me. To be absolutely honest about it, we are hopeless in that regard. There is a total captive membership there which is not being effectively pursued and it really should be and we could sort of really without breaking into a sweat at all, manage to increase the membership without confronting all sorts of hostile forces. And sometimes when we talk about how difficult the environment is for recruiting it really disguises that fact that there are those opportunities there that we don't pursue. That is not to say that there are not hostile employers – of course there are and there are some who pay over the odds to keep unions out. And we know the philosophical vent of a lot of the multi-nationals who wouldn't have us around the house in any circumstances at all.

But there are others whom it is possible to crack. People who don't pay over the odds and the 2004 Act in the Republic and the Employee Relations Act in Northern Ireland, although not perfect by any manner of means and my Northern Ireland colleagues will tell me that the Act here is far from perfect and in fact the number of cases taken under the Act here last year has been quite small - I think a total of eleven and I realise the difficulties, but the 2004 Act in the Republic is a fairly effective instrument if you look at the cases which have already been taken. And the indications of the success of that are the high profile cases we know about with Ashford Castle and Ryanair where there is an effective legal challenge being made to the constitutionality of the Act virtually, or at least it will be – whatever stage it is at in the High Court process now eventually will possibly go down that road.

But one thing in operating that Act I think we need to improve as well in terms of going into the Labour Court and making a presentation to the Court, you cannot do it on the basis of hearsay evidence about wages or whatever. It is clear now that you must have good, hard, solidly researched information to put to the Court and if you do that that 2004 Act will pay dividends as has been shown so far. Also on that I mean, although we won't get into it now, but if we had ever succeeded in having European Constitution Article 28 which deals with the rights of people to access collective bargaining at some stage, that might have provided some help for us as well. However, that is another day's work – I shouldn't even mention it at this stage.

The third point I would make about another area of difficulty in organising is the fact that 85 percent of companies in the Republic of Ireland employ less than 10 people and that is a total of 400,000 people. Some 260,000 of those are predominantly female or part-time or migrant workers. Now this group is one we don't have a mechanism for reaching. That's the fact. It is impossible to reach them through traditional means because it is far too labour intensive and there is no possibility of the unions putting in the resources that would be necessary to organise such a dispersed group of workers, so we need to find a new paradigm for organising those people which has the capacity to get them in and has the ability to be cost effective as well. Now that requires a new model of organising which Congress has developed and which the Executive Council has been discussing. The crucial thing about it though is it requires a level of collaboration between affiliated unions which has historically not been available to us. We have to change our thinking about it. We are going to have to pool our efforts and our resources in order to reach that particular group.

So therefore I have identified for you three categories of people amongst the 1.3 million people on this Island who are not unionised and who could be, or at least substantial numbers of them could be, if we manage to get our act together and to go after them.

Now the Executive Council has made the decision that organising and recruitment will be on its agenda every month. It has also made the decision that we need to pursue this collaborative model and over the summer months the Congress Secretariat will be attempting to have some bilaterals with individual unions in the private sector particularly just to talk about what this might mean and what might be necessary to bring this into effect and try to engage people with that model, and to refine it and to iron out all the practical difficulties of it. As a Secretariat we can bring it to a stage which is a concept but in order to make the concept really work, number one you need people to buy into it and number two you need experience and knowledge and a lot of detailed work to work out the glitches in it and the technical obstacles to its effective implementation. But nevertheless I am personally convinced that it is something which can work and if it can work – look – I tell you the truth – it will either work brilliantly or it won't work at all. It is as simple as that. There won't be any midway course to it. But we have to find a more cost effective model for organising than we have at the moment because we are not getting at the total catchment of people we need to get at.

So I suppose, in summary, in introducing the Organising section of the report I think we have managed to do a good bit over the two years since BDC 2003. We still have much more to do of course. I want to take the opportunity of thanking the outgoing Executive Council members for their engagement with our agenda and their help and support at all times and I want to particularly thank my colleagues on the staff because you cannot take out resources and take bodies out of an organisation and think that the water fills in automatically without imposing extra burdens on people to raise, basically, the standard and the quality of their own work. And they have responded magnificently to that and I mean, to tell the truth, I'd say they think I am a real pain in the butt a lot of the time and that I don't appreciate what they do, but I do in fact appreciate that and I think that Congress is a better organisation now than it was, and hopefully over the next year or so we will get to an optimum level of efficiency and be able to crack some of the serious problems that are facing us in the future. Thanks very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Congress, we want to move to the financial statement and it is contained in Appendix 7 with the EC Report and Treasurer, Joe O'Flynn.

Joe O'Flynn, Congress Treasurer

On behalf of the Executive Council I am moving Motion No 8 in relation to affiliation fees and also addressing the issue of the financial report as the President has identified is attached in your report as Appendix 7.

Affiliates who were present at the 2003 BDC will recall that at that juncture Congress identified itself as having very serious financial difficulties. In fact in 2002 we had a deficit of in excess of €33,000 on the No 1 Account and indeed that was only offset somewhat by a surplus of about €129,000 on the Training & Advisory Account. But overall in 2002 we ended up with a consolidated position of €200,000 in deficit and when you consider that figure against the overall income which is quite small for Congress, it clearly was a time of great concern in relation to the financial position of Congress itself. Little wonder then why I was unopposed for Treasurer facing into that particular BDC.

Following the Conference it was very evident to the Executive Council that a review of the organisation had to take place. And under the General Secretary's leadership and indeed assisted by Sally Anne and Peter and others, an extensive review of all expenditure items within Congress took place. It wasn't simply about staff, it was all areas of expenditure. However, the most radical changes occurred in the area of the staff resource and to that end I think David has already identified the fact that a number of positions remained unfilled. Existing staff were asked to alter their duties to take on additional responsibilities and indeed that was done not without some difficulty among some of the staff. And just as David has done, on behalf of the Executive Council and indeed the affiliated organisations of Congress, I also want to very sincerely put on record the appreciation of all the unions affiliated to Congress to all of the staff who helped and who cooperated in what was a very difficult process in relation to that restructuring.

Facing into 2003 there was an actual deficit projected of €161,000. That had been turned around to a surplus of, a very slight surplus of in excess of €68,000 on the No 1 Account and with the slight surplus on the Training & Advisory Account, we ended 2003 with a €93,000 surplus. Again not anything to write home about and in the context of the Congress finances still leaving us in a very precarious position. The 2004 position, particularly as a result of the restructuring, was a surplus of €144,550 on the No 1 Account. However, the Training & Advisory Account ended up in a slight deficit of €50,000 due to benchmarking increases and pension contribution increases and what have you. And the overall position that we were left with for 2004 was a surplus of just over €54,000, again very precarious.

While we were and are heading in the right direction, we were then faced with a very difficult position with relation to the Congress Pension Schemes both in relation to the staff in the Republic and in Northern Ireland and both of the schemes are actually under-funded to the tune of over 30 percent and in financial terms that is a huge burden which is now facing Congress to obviously correct the position in relation to both the Republic and Northern Ireland pension schemes. It represents a financial difficulty to us on the one front but it also presents us with a very serious political challenge because Congress clearly has to be at the forefront in defending and protecting Defined Benefit Pension

Schemes as the best way for providing for workers in their retirement years. And it is critical therefore, that we as a Congress protect the integrity of the staff pension schemes and particularly in relation to the Defined Benefit Schemes that our staff enjoy within Congress. It will have a long-term funding challenge to us and presently the General Purposes Committee, the management of Congress and the staff and their representatives are working with a view to meeting that challenge in relation to the funding deficit that presently exists.

Along with that - if we are to take seriously the points made by the General Secretary - Congress not alone has to be seen to be defending and protecting what we have presently, but also rising to the challenge, huge challenge, of organising workers. Of the many thousands and thousands of workers both in the Republic and Northern Ireland who are not presently in unions then we have to find a way of resourcing that organisation and recruitment challenge. And if you look at the employer organisations, and there are many of them, they are all very well resourced. IBEC, ISME, the SFA, Chambers of Commerce, the other beauty the Chamber of Horrors – the American Chamber of Commerce, and all of those are pumping big money in to undermine the work that we have done and the pay and conditions and the standards of employment that we have fought hard and achieved over the years. And therefore, colleagues, it is important not alone in meeting the challenges internally within Congress in respect to the financial position we are in but also to provide the necessary resources to equip Dave and the staff of Congress to provide the level of support and the level of service that we as affiliates are demanding and insisting upon, that we come forward here today with a resolution to increase the affiliation fees from the current €2.08 in the Republic per individual member to €2.27 from 1 January, 2006 and €2.38 from 1 January, 2007 and that the Sterling equivalent would apply for Northern Ireland membership. Also in relation to the Associate Membership that would be two-thirds of the full membership and a slight increase as well for the local Councils of Trade Unions.

Colleagues, it is critically important that all of us wholeheartedly support this motion and that we vote for its adoption because without the necessary finances and resources we are tying the hands of Congress in giving us the level of support that we are seeking and it isn't just in relation to the day to day industrial activity, but where we have to be to the forefront is in relation to equipping Congress in terms of research, in terms of strategic planning, in terms of policy formation and all of the necessary work that will defend and protect the living standards of all of our members both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. Colleagues, I commend the motion to you.

Before I conclude I think it would be remiss of me if I didn't put on record a very sincere appreciation to David, to Sally Anne and to indeed all of the staff in Congress who rallied around and took on a huge job of work in relation to the Tsunami Appeal which the Executive of Congress established immediately after the disaster on 26 December. And as you know many, many people on this

island very generously supported the emergency appeal in the aftermath. But what Congress decided to do was to set up a fund that would help to restore the livelihoods of many of the workers and their families who were affected by the disaster itself. That took the shape of a workplace appeal and Congress were to the forefront in huge, huge task in getting out all of the data and communicating the appeal to the various workplaces and we want to thank, and certainly I want to thank very sincerely the staff at Congress for the enormous effort which was put into that appeal. I also want to thank all the Congress affiliates who supported it through the workplace collections, but also the Congress affiliates who themselves supported the appeal and that work will be ongoing for quite some time to come in conjunction with our international colleagues, particularly in the ILO and I believe that the solidarity that we showed in relation to the aftermath of that Tsunami was typical of the solidarity that we will have to engage in going forward in meeting the many challenges that present to us as a workers' movement.

Colleagues, go raibh mile maith agut – thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, Motion 8 is formally moved. We have got two decisions to make; one is on the financial statement as contained in Appendix 7. Do we agree to accept the financial statement? Agreed.

We are on to Motion 8 which is an amendment to the constitution with regards to affiliation fees. Is that agreed? Ok, thank you. Can I record anyone on the basis, anyone against? Ok. Abstentions – No? Thank you. That's being technical.

Can we move on to Motion 9 which is in the name of Strabane Trades Council and just to say that the Executive Council are seeking remission on this motion. Do we have a speaker from Strabane Trades Council?

Look colleagues again in the interest of time could the speakers to Motion 10 please make your way forward as well.

Felix McCrossan, Strabane Trades Council

Colleagues, on behalf of Strabane Trades Council I wish to propose Motion 9 on Trades Councils.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Are you accepting remission Felix?

Felix McCrossan, Strabane Trades Council

I have been sent here to propose this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Ok, fine.

Felix McCrossan, Strabane Trades Council

I know it is not a particularly good motion coming after the finances but I think because it is probably calling on money to be spent. Anyway, Conference recognises the ongoing commitment from the ICTU North and South and the work done to reactivate dormant trades councils and develop new councils. Conference also recognises previous Biennial Delegate Conferences policies related to the improvement of trade councils etc. However, Conference is concerned that not all affiliated organisations affiliate or contribute directly or indirectly to the work of trades councils by promoting affiliation of their respective organisations or financially assisting trades councils in the work that they carry out, on behalf of the wider trade union movement. In my opinion many trade unions must treat trades councils better than they do. They must put them higher on their agenda, they must support them financially, they must become actively involved in trades councils by affiliating to them, by appointing delegates to them, by ensuring that their delegates attend and participate in the work of the councils. I am sure that there are many delegates here today, delegates, who are not aware of the difficulties which trades councils have in getting unions to affiliate to them or that by not affiliating to them they are denying you the opportunity to become involved in many bodies that affect you and your families and communities. You delegates must raise this issue of trades councils within your union. You need to ensure that they affiliate. You can do this by writing to your union, raising it at branch meetings, by asking your branch secretary, by raising it with your full-time official, which I was for about thirty years. Full-time officers need to place trades councils further up their agenda, general secretaries must do likewise and those who control the unions' purse strings must loosen them and pay their affiliation fees, and as the treasurer of Strabane Trades Council preferably on time.

Finally, I call on you to support the motion and it is called for a Special Delegate Conference on Trades Councils because without the support many of these councils may die or they will become less effective. Could I just propose the motion and ask for your support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Felix. Have we got a seconder? Seconded.

Dooley Harte, Craigavon Trades Council

President, Conference, Dooley Harte from Craigavon Trades Council to formally second Motion No 9. Conference, I think it is accepted that trades councils are an important asset for the wider trade union movement. We only have to consider the work of trades councils with regards to rallies, meetings organised, certainly in Northern Ireland with regards the introduction of water charges, the efforts made by trades councils locally to deal with racism, sectarianism and to take forward and make available locally an opportunity for the public to see and for workers to see what the trade union movement can do for them. With regards to Craigavon, the trades council has organised public meetings and seminars on anti-racism and water charges and have involved local politicians, community groups, minority ethnic communities and local employers on all these issues. We have supported local unions on issues such as the education cuts, pensions, public sector pay and we know that our trades council has not been alone in taking forward these initiatives. In taking forward these issues Craigavon trades council has been supported by the reestablishment of trades councils that has increases awareness in other issues and provides a mechanism for the trades council representative on the Northern Ireland Committee to take issues to the NIC and to report back to trades councils. In support of this committee, trades councils have agreed, with the Northern Ireland Committee, a program of work for the period 2005-2007 and this program informs the affiliates of the work of the trades councils and provides a focus for individual councils. Conference, trades councils have previously and probably will continue to complain about the supposed lack of support from affiliates. This is both on a lack of representatives and a lack of finance through affiliation fees. However, Conference, we also recognise that affiliates do not have an opportunity to influence the role and direction of trades councils and we see this as a vital way of promoting trades councils. Conference, we have a process in place in Northern Ireland that allows trades councils to work together to implement a program of work agreed by Congress. However, all affiliates, not just those on the Northern Ireland Committee or the Executive Council, are allowed an opportunity to influence the direction of trades councils and to utilise locally the energy of trades councils members to further the trade union cause. We accept that there are many ways to do this and we see the recommendation of a Special Delegate Conference as a way of doing this. Please support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Seamus, are you speaking on this? Ok.

Seamus Dooley, NUJ

Reluctantly opposing Motion No 9, and I speak as a recently elected member of the Executive of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. I believe that the trade union councils play a powerful role. They are an untapped potential within the movement. I think that trades councils in Northern Ireland, in particular, have played an important role, sometimes in areas where individual constituent unions have failed to address them. The problem with this motion is that it doesn't suggest action – it suggests a Conference. And I don't think a Conference of all affiliated organisations is the way forward on this issue. It calls for a debate – I think there is a need for a debate but I think the idea of a massive Conference at which those actually involved would bemoan the fact that things used to be better and other people say that they could be worse, I am not sure that that is the way forward. I think that we might look at imaginatively using the trades councils structures and, perhaps using the Biennial structure, why don't we have fringe meetings involving trade council reps. Why don't we use the venues that we have, the existing structures that we have, I don't believe that a special Conference is the way forward to address the concerns, the legitimate concerns, expressed on this. I had hoped that Strabane Area Trades Council would remit this motion but if they do not remit then I would reluctantly oppose this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Any more speakers to the motion?

I call on the General Secretary.

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

President, colleagues. Seamus effectively has put the view of the Executive Council on this. I want to assure Strabane Area Trades Council that the

Executive Council would endorse fully the sentiments in the motion and, you know, has come to the conclusion itself that the importance of trade councils is something which needs to be fostered for a whole variety of reasons, not least because if we are serious about recruitment and organising we need to use every single instrument that is available to us. And in that sense if we didn't have a local trade union structure we would have to think about inventing one. It is also true, that I think myself that in recent years with the growth of local radio and so on that there is a huge importance in having a sort of a local feed in of a trade union perspective to match say the local Chamber of Commerce who will be asked its opinion about something to do with a town or an industry or something like that. The problem we have is the one that Seamus has articulated – it is just whether organising a special Conference is not overkill for something like that. Number one, there is no doubt that if a special Conference was held it would reaffirm its commitment to local trades councils. I wouldn't expect any other result to come from it but establishing a debate on the future direction I am not sure it is necessary. I mean I think that debate is on now within the trade union movement. The debate is around organising and how every part of the trade union movement can be galvanised in order to support the organising effort so I think that the special Conference is superfluous. There is a danger to it in fact that, you know, that if it was a damp squib it might give people the wrong impression about the objective you had. So all in all our feeling is full support for what the Strabane Area Trades Council is saying but on how to pursue that agenda our view is that that last paragraph is not a good and on that basis would ask you to remit it.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Felix, do you want the right to reply and also as the General Secretary has said we are still seeking remission, otherwise the Executive Council will be opposing it.

Felix Crossan, Strabane Area Trades Council

Well, I am open to correction, but it is my information that a previous decision of Conference was to call a special delegate Conference on trades councils but it didn't happen, hence this motion. And, you know, the remark about 'if it turned out a damp squib' - what do you mean by this? If this Conference turned out a damp squib, you know, what effect would that have? You mean, who is going to say that any Conference would turn out a damp squib? The other thing is that there are many bodies and I think lay people don't really understand this, there are many bodies, particularly since the European money started to come here to Northern Ireland, there are many bodies that we should be represented on and we don't have enough people to get on them, to put on them. And, I believe that there are many lay people don't realise that, that their unions are not affiliating to

the local trades councils or they are not financially supporting them. And as I said when I was saying earlier, that you know you need to be in there. There are local strategy partnership committees in all areas that dole out a considerable amount of money and we should be in there and we need delegates on trades councils to get in there and do that and we need the trade unions to ensure that they do that. And, I mean if they don't affiliate or if they don't pay their fees or if they don't support, anyhow, before I close, I am prepared to remit, but I think people need to think seriously about the whole issue of trades councils.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Ok, thank you Felix.

I would also thank you for agreeing to remit and all I can do is to ensure that the Executive Committee will carry out the sentiments exactly as expressed within it to which David has committed himself. So we agree remission? Agreed. Thank you.

I want to move on to Motion No 10 which is tax treatment of union subs.

Seán O'Riordáin, AHCPs

President, delegates, this motion is self-explanatory. As you know the Executive Council has negotiated a beneficial arrangement in relation to taxation of trade union subscriptions and there is a limit of €200 per annum and the purpose and intent of this motion is to seek to have as best as possible that extended ideally to cover the whole subscription. I ask for your support, thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Have we got a seconder?

Formally seconded, thank you.

I am putting the motion to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those against.

Motion is passed.

Ok, we are moving on to Motion No 11. Just to draw attention – Motion No 11 has been deemed out of order, as you have accepted Standing Orders Report No 1, as is Motion No 12.

Also to say delegates should be looking at the information contained in the following sections of Biennial Report and I call for the adoption of the report on chapters 3,4,5, and 6 and the appendices as follows with regards to Disputes Committee reports, work of Congress committees, Union Education and Training, affiliations and Congress staff. Do we agree? Thank you.

Finance and Organisation

14.30 – 16.15 Private Session

(Motions 13-14)

(Principal EC Report reference Section 1, Chapter 2, “Recruitment and Organisation”)

Moving on to the section on Recruitment and Organisation, which is Motion No 13. Peter McLoone speaking on behalf of the Executive Council.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Thanks President, Peter McLoone speaking on behalf of the Executive Council. Delegates, as the General Secretary has already informed you, Congress is still the largest civil society organisation in Ireland. And with 770,000 members we have achieved our highest membership figures ever. Thousands of volunteers continue to work with hundreds of full-time officials in the common endeavour of securing improvements for working people and their families inside and outside the workplace and pursuing that objective by recruiting workers and organising them in trade unions. But despite our many successes, despite the continued growth in membership figures and notwithstanding the continued participation and unselfish willingness of the thousands of activists to be involved in the promotion of the trade union agenda, union density is in a gradual, steady decline. The report of the Executive Council to this Congress at Section 1 on page 15, sets out the factors that are contributing to declining union density both internal and external. The report also analyses the recruitment challenge and states that it must become the central objective of all trade union activity. In the foreword to the Executive Council Report on page 6, recruitment and organising

is described as the key to everything. Delegates, understanding why is critical to accepting the main point expressed in this motion, which is that recruitment and organising will have first call on all available resources of Congress.

The Executive Council is convinced that we can still engage with the recruitment agenda from a position of relative strength, provided that we resist the temptation to passively adopt these two motions and provided we confront the stark reality that our current approach will not arrest the decline in union density. The question for this generation of trade unionists is if we fail to meet the recruitment challenge head on and if we fail to engage with it steadily and consistently over the next two or three years, what will the trade union movement be like in 2010, 2015, 2020, 2025, just twenty years from now. Will people in work, will people out of work still wake up in the morning grateful that they enjoy union membership, grateful that there are still trade unions to join? The case for trade unions, the need for trade unions was never more powerfully made than in the debate on migrant workers and the rights of migrants this morning, and in the case that Barbara Ehrenreich made in her presentation just before lunch. But this generation has to get to grips with the fact that we have to get better and be more effective if we are to meet the recruitment challenge that we face this year in 2005. New members will not fall into our laps, we are going to have to work hard to recruit them.

Meeting the recruitment challenge obliges us to accept a number of things. First of all the General Secretary is right – we have to start doing the basics and we have to start doing the simple things right. But we also need to accept that continuing to act individually will not make any real penetration and that if we, as a fragmented movement, take that option, the decline will have got worse by the time we meet in Donegal two years from now. We need to tackle now, collectively, the internal factors that are contributing to declining union membership. That is the factors within our gift to resolve and particularly as Jack O'Connor recently said, eliminate the scourge of competitive trade unionism and also we need to act collectively to promote trade unionism within our society.

As the General Secretary said the Executive Council will have to take on and stick with the development, resourcing and implementation of a recruitment and organising plan to address this decline and to stick with this over the entirety of the next two years. However, the greatest test and this is at the core of the argument I am making, will be our capacity to pool our resources in a way which generates the funds that are necessary to develop and support the alternative avenues that will allow us to reach, attract, recruit and retain new members.

Delegates, the funds are not currently within the coffers of Congress. The new affiliation fees, which you have just agreed, will generate additional money but certainly not enough to resource what is required if the campaign to recruit new members is to succeed. To fund this campaign affiliates, in my opinion, will have to earmark additional resources from our own budgets and to sustain that over

the next five years at least. We need to accept that we are dealing with a fierce and hostile opposition that is far better resourced than we are and unless we get our heads around that fact we will do a great disservice to the generation that will come after us.

Our movement is driven by one simple but powerful principle: people really do matter and we passionately believe that every individual has a value, has a worth and is entitled to respect within society. Those who oppose trade unions see the individual as a commodity and they want our influence curtailed. Their message, consistently now, is that trade unions are in decline, membership is falling in real terms but more importantly their message is that collective action or collective interests are no longer relevant to the real needs of a modern Irish economy and are obstacles to competition. These are real competing forces – this is a battle about what is right and what is wrong and we cannot contemplate losing, so let's engage with the recruitment challenge with only one objective: that is that we are going to succeed, to broaden our appeal and to make our relevance more concrete, we need to do what the General Secretary said a number of years ago, we need not just to be a workers' movement but a movement of the people who work and the people who don't work. So I ask you delegates in supporting and adopting this motion to embrace the message to support us in our call for resources and to work with us consistently over the next two years so that when we come back to Conference we will be able to say we didn't just arrest the decline we pushed it backwards and we began to tackle and resolve the problems that were in our gift to resolve. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Formally seconded. Speakers to the motion?

Chris Hudson, CWU

President, Comrades, speaking to the paragraph and to the motion. One of the things that I have learned through a number of years of organising is that multi-national companies will behave in jurisdictions depending on the legislation governing labour law and recognition within that jurisdiction. In particular with a number of companies it is prudent for me to say that some of the multi-national companies that I have dealt with have been far more acceptable to trade union organisation than indeed some indigenous companies. Vodafone, Capita, Interlink – which is part of Geo Poste – the French multi-national, UPS (United Parcels Service – the American multi-national) and now in American Airlines, having eventually organised their staff they are now more cooperative and indeed we have never suffered with any of those companies for anybody being dismissed over union organisation. But sadly two companies – two Irish indigenous companies, one Airport Haulage in Cork sacked two of our members

who tried to organise there. And more recently, Smart Telecom, which has been phoning many people to get them to transfer their business from eircom to Smart Telecom recently made two of our members redundant. We believe it was not redundancy – it was unfair dismissal. And the reason they did this was that those two people are the two people that I recruited to organise members within Smart Telecom. Now no doubt Smart Telecom will be phoning many people here and indeed many companies that you work for, seeking your business. Well ask them the question and its not the question are they organised by a union; but do they recognise the right of their staff to join a union and the right of their staff to be recognised in that union. And if the answer is no then tell them that you don't want their business.

Colleagues, the Executive of Congress is right. We need to organise and since we have been organising in new companies and since the privatisation of eircom, our union is essentially more a private sector company than a public union.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can you wind up please.

Chris Hudson, CWU

Ok, and we have now got Executive members who are employees of UPS, and indeed Vodafone. Comrades, I ask you to support this motion and organise.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Chris. Anyone else – Margery?

Margery Trimble, UNISON

President, delegates, Margery Trimble, UNISON, supporting Motion 13. One of the ways UNISON has addressed the issue of recruitment and organising is through their branch development team. A group of senior activists, supporting those assistant branches who help, through sharing best practices, supporting and training new stewards and activists. One of the most vital jobs of the steward is to recruit new members because organised workplaces with high density of union membership means unions will have a much greater influence with local management and employers. Members will have a strong sense of

confidence and ability to change things together with much higher changes of winning recognition in non-recognised workplaces. They will have more stewards, safety representatives and workplace contacts that run the union locally and ensure that the branches are truly representative. All of this means that the unions will have greater influence both locally and nationally which help unions campaign to improve public services, to stop discrimination, for quality of opportunity and for better pay and conditions of service. And unions will have greater stability. The more members we have, the greater the income the branch has to provide support to stewards and members. Remember that it is particularly important to recruit young members if a union is to grow and be strong in its future. Nobody asked me – that is the single biggest reason that people give for not having joined a trade union and the best people to recruit are union members working alongside them. Successful recruiters can influence non-members to join when the union is seen to be active, has credibility, organises in workplaces and actively contacts potential members on a regular basis. There are many barriers in the way of people joining a union and effective organisation can aim to remove as many as these barriers as possible. I support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Margery.

Any more speakers on this?

Dessie Donalson UNISON

President, delegates Dessie Donalson UNISON supporting Motion No 13. UNISON fully welcomes the development of this debate and fully supports Motion 13. At its core, this debate is about the role and division of trade unions in Irish society. Are we workplace insurance reps or do we organise and empower workers to make an effective change in the workplace? This debate about the organising model that is happening throughout the international trade union movement in the US, Australia and Britain stems from a fundamental desire to see our unions become more effective and stronger in the face of decreasing union density. There are many reasons as outlined in the report for the decrease in union density. One is the servicing model which sees members as customers of the union as opposed to agents for social change. Increasing employer opposition, growth in the service sector with part-time and temporary employment etc that all make it difficult to organise. But let's face it – these factors are nothing new. There are always barriers to organising a union. Imagine organising a union post 1913 Dublin lock out, or imagine organising a

home house throughout the 1970s and 80s. It is always precarious, always very difficult to organise, yet it was done.

We are all union organisers and union leaders in this room. It is our responsibility to move unorganised workers past these barriers. We need to be relevant to our members and potential members. We need to campaign and take action on issues that will recruit and retain and build power for workers. We need to build our activist base by proving that we are a vehicle for social change on the basis of human rights and equality and we need to target industries where union density is low and develop strategic plans. ICTU and affiliates have an important part to play in this transformation. Organising needs to be the priority for our movement. More importantly as the motion refers to, we need to be given the resources, leadership and structure necessary for the task.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Dessie.

Conference I want to put Motion 13 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those against please show. Abstentions?

Passed unanimously.

I want to move to Motion No 14 on Recruitment and Organising in the name of IMPACT.

Louise O'Donnell, IMPACT

Louise O'Donnell, IMPACT moving Motion 14. Most trade union movements in Europe and across the globe prioritised recruitment after they had reached a crisis in membership numbers. Motions 13 and 14 are asking this Conference to do something different. To act now to avoid a crisis by making recruitment and organisation Congress' first priority over the coming years. Irish trade unionism is a success story. We have more members than ever before but we are not keeping up with the massive growth in employment, particularly in the South. Membership growth is not an end in itself and the motions don't propose a choice between serving our existing members and attracting new ones. We need to do both. If we don't deliver for our members why should new people join? But equally all of our successes and achievements depend on us maintaining and increasing membership. Strength in numbers is not an old fashioned slogan. It means sustaining the credibility and clout to deal with employers, to improve pay, working conditions and standards of living. It means being relevant in a way that

makes Government and other policy shapers listen and having the resources to operate effectively and creatively. It is not enough to lament the fact that fewer young people, fewer workers are turning to us. We must ask why? Too often we behave as if it's a moral, political or ideological duty to join a union. It is not and this attitude won't attract the people we need to convince.

Looking at the white collar sector, they are well educated, confident and ambitious people with high expectations of what working life will deliver for them. The research we have tells us that they are not hostile to unions but they expect us to demonstrate that we share their ambitions and concerns and they want us to tell them why it is in their interest to join up. Of course it is important to highlight problems in the workplace and society, but we must stop being defensive about our achievements and our relevance. This month sees the latest *Sustaining Progress* pay increase. It means pay increases totalling at least 8.5 percent in less than eighteen months for most trade union members. Any other organisation in the service business would be signing this achievement from the rooftops but we are silent. And then we wonder why some people think unions are irrelevant.

To take another example, IMPACT recently won compensation for nearly 100 civil servants, professional and relevantly well paid workers who are suffering discrimination because they were on temporary contracts. Without a trade union they would not even have been aware of their rights let alone have had them vindicated. I am sure that every union in this hall has a similar story to tell. It is time to get off the defensive and start telling people why it is in their best interest to be in a union. We need to prioritise. Prioritising means more than putting recruitment and organisation on our meeting agendas. It must be part of every thing we do. When we go into negotiations, does our claim resonate with potential as well as existing members? When we win a claim at the Labour Court or the Labour Relations Commission, have we reached out to potential members who might have similar cases? When we are balloting for industrial action have we explained our reasons to the thousands of workers who might be inconvenienced as well as the hundreds of members with the grievance? When we make plans for our organisations do we set time and resources aside for recruitment and organisation? When we speak at an ICTU Conference have we thought about how we are presenting our movement to the outside world? This is what priority means. It is about devoting substantial human and financial resources but it also demands that we think about and change the things we do and the way we do them. Support Motion 14.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, Louise. Do we have a seconder? Secunder formally, ok.

Sean Gibson, UNISON

Mr President, Congress, delegates. After being a member of UNISON for about six or seven years on the 1 April this year, yes, April Fool's Day, I became a full-time Branch Development Officer. To say that I had a baptism of fire is an understatement because nothing focuses a union organiser's mind like impending industrial action. The very successful one day strike on Friday 13 April against the enforced cuts in the education budget in the North of Ireland was a sound basis to organise among the non-teaching staff in the education services. Our education branches recruited well over a thousand people in nearly a month in the run up to this action. Many of these were joining a union for the very, very first time. Yet organising and recruitment is not just about strike action. It is also about taking action about issues which impact on all our members. Issues like racism, which we heard so much about today, issues about two-tier workforces, about privatisation. It is also about facilitating and developing self-organising groups. In UNISON we have developed self-organising groups that included minority ethnic groups, disabled, gay and lesbian woman and youth groups. These groups meet regularly to develop policies and strategies that are relevant to them. Recruitment and organisation is also about developing our members' base through education programmes designed to grow activists and stewards. UNISON's action programme for members has provided a first rate tool for recruitment and organisation. Issues like the proposed privatisation of the cleaning staff in the education services in the North, the IMC reports, the agenda for change and the ongoing crises for education offer opportunities to engage with people who are not or never have been members of a union.

I would like to finish by saying recruitment and organisation is the lifeblood of our union. I support the motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, Sean.

Can we put Motion 14 to floor? Those in favour please show. Those against please show. Abstentions please show. Passed unanimously.

Congress, we want to look to adopt Chapter 2, section 1 of the Executive Committee report. Is that agreed? Ok thank you Congress.

That brings us to the end of the Private Session and I want to return to the Migrant Workers debate which is on Motions, 1,2,3,4,5, and 6 and there was three speakers who we had to put back this morning who wanted to speak to the common debate.

The Rights of Migrant Workers (continued)

(Motions 1 – 7)

16.15 - 17.15

(Principal EC Report reference Section1, Chapter 1, “Migration Policy & the Rights of Workers”)

Pamela Daly, UNISON

Pamela Daly, UNSION supporting Motions 1 to 6 on migrant workers. President, delegates, it is right and proper that this Conference should start the debate by addressing the distress faced by some of the most vulnerable workers in the country. Some have said that the plight of migrant workers is a disaster waiting to happen. For some workers it has already happened.

We recently faced the worst possible case. A nurse who took her own life because of the treatment she faced. Others face racism on a daily basis. From society, from employers, from fellow workers and from Government. In the North we have now witnessed more than one racist killing. To tackle this fundamental denial of rights we face a range of challenges. As a movement we must put pressure on Government to protect the rights of migrant workers. We must exert maximum pressure on employers, particularly those content to exploit for profit. And that means making recruitment and organising a priority. We must confront the racists at all times and we must recognise the internal challenge we face.

There is no doubt that rights groups and trade unions are essential to the process of tackling racism in Ireland today. We need to work together to tackle institutional racism and to secure new and better rights for our colleagues. We also need to recognise that racism exists within our own ranks and is faced not only by migrant workers by also by our ethnic minority communities who long been an integral part of society North and South. For example, Irish travellers and the Chinese community.

I have been running an intensive recruitment and organising programme for migrant workers and ethnic minority workers for some years. I have seen the fear on the faces of workers in the private sector who are afraid the boss may find out that they are in the union. That becomes a much more profound fear if the boss has control of the work permit, if the accommodation is tied, if their passport is being held without their consent and if the threat of deportation is ever present. Despite all this they still have the guts to unionise when given a chance.

I want see Congress take all these motions, re-establish the anti-racism network.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Congress, light, ok, next speaker, thank you very much.

Sumana Skillen, UNISON

President, delegates, Sumana Skillen, UNISON speaking in support of Motion 4. It is important to remember that the Government and statutory bodies have an obligation to tackle incidents of racism and institutional racism. We are very concerned that more than one year after the introduction of a strong statutory duty to promote equality on the grounds of race. Racism is even more rampant. Government and the public sector are actively bound by this law to positively promote equality in all policies and functions. There is a significant failure to do so. If they were taking it seriously we would, for example, have seen by now the equality impact assessment privatised contracts on access to public services. Those equality impact assessment would clearly demonstrate the level of discrimination and disadvantaged experienced by our members from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is about a program of action inside UNISON and ICTU to train and equip all negotiators and activists and the members most affected to enable ICTU and affiliates to actively use this equality tool to change the way Government and public services make decisions on race equality. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, Sumana.

Clare Tracey, INO

President, we very much welcome the opportunity to add our voice today to all the other unions who are speaking out on these very important issues in relation to migrant workers. We are all aware that workers are open to exploitation and in fact we are aware that migrant workers are more open to exploitation but I think we have heard this morning example after example of workers, migrant workers, in the private sector who have been appallingly exploited.

We would have to say that a system which gives the work permit that should belong with the employee, who gives that work permit to the employer, that is a system that is nothing short of telling an employer that they have permission to exploit a worker. By way of example the Irish Nurses Organisation recently dealt with a situation where five Indian nurses were recruited into a Nursing Home.

For this privilege of working in Ireland each of those nurses paid €5,000 to the recruitment company. This gave them the benefit of working in a Nursing Home 60 hours per week on a reduced hourly rate with no overtime, no annual leave and no sick leave. This matter was resolved satisfactorily but the issue of concern here is all those other nurses and workers who were afraid to go to their union to be looked after and to be helped. This is an issue which we, as a trade union, have responsibility for. We have to work together to recruit and represent all workers, and in particular migrant workers. We must not pay lip service to what Brendan said this morning in his presidential address, when he said that we welcome migrant workers and we must act on that now.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, Clare. Michael O'Reilly slow to get up and speak, yes?

Michael O'Reilly, ATGWU

President and comrades, firstly I just want to say a word of thanks to everyone who supported myself and Eugene McGlone in our recent difficulties. Gladly that is behind us.

The second thing I just want to comment on are the remarks of the General Secretary when he said that he didn't always read the annual report – I too can come out and say I didn't read the annual report but it is the first time I have attended the ICTU in six years and I have read a good deal of the annual report and I am particularly struck with the question of asylum seekers. And the fact it didn't have to be put in there because it is not necessary part of what the motions are about. They are about migrant workers but he has chosen to put it in and I want to commend him for that because I think it is a very brave thing to do because there is a lot of racism in our society and indeed there is a lot of racism in our ranks. We have to find ways and means of rooting that out. And of course when you look at the historic perspective on this I always remember Michael Davitt because when Irish workers were recruited by British employers sometimes they used to always go for Irish speakers because they couldn't communicate with the British workers because of the language and they brought them in as scabs in their thousands all over Britain in the 19th Century. And if you want to read racist propaganda read the British press in the 19th Century about the Irish and what they done in Britain and you see it all just repeated again and again and again in our own societies today. It is the same story. Michael Davitt, as a child, was kicked into a loom and lost his arm at 11 years of age working in the mills. He went on to become a Fenian and he also in Ireland stood up for the Jews in Limerick. That is the kind of people who have built this trade union movement and we should remember that when we talk about it.

I, myself, as an immigrant campaigning in the 1966 election, I may give out my age here, campaigning for a communist party candidate, Harry Borne, knocked at a door and the guy opened the door, he was like Desperate Dan multiplied by twenty, huge man, and he said to me what do you want and I said, well I am canvassing for the Communist Party and he said oh, I'll vote for them, he said. They know how to deal with the Nig Nogs in the Soviet Union. I nearly died – I went up to Harry Borne and he said I hope you told him what to do with his vote.

So that's it – you find racism in all sorts of places but I want to comment on this. Because recently this Government and the Belgium Government have had amnesties for their illegal immigrants and I think we should look at that. David is quite right – there is no joy for us in having a Minister who splits up families. I'll conclude on this. If we are not humane on these issues we are nothing and I commend the report and all the motions. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

President, brothers and sisters, Terry Kelleher from the Executive of the Civil and Public Services Union. I just want to bring a bit of balance to the debate and relate to GAMA. GAMA was a stunning victory – not only for immigrant workers but for Irish workers – a stunning victory. A victory which took a long struggle of months. Around 280 workers that had no English, no knowledge of the law or anything really outside the site, because they were boxed away with satellite telly, that only had Turkish stations, completely cut off – this was all organised from the start to exploit them even further. Now the action, which was unofficial up to a point, unofficial action exposed corruption and won an enormous victory in terms of giving back the stolen wages that were in the banks in Holland. The gains made by this struggle, I don't think, can be underestimated, or sorry overestimated. This has brought confidence to other workers and the spread and you have the examples of the ferry workers coming out, they got confidence from that issue. Joe Higgin's Dail office now gets over ten letters a day from workers all over Ireland looking for help. That should be us – we should be getting those letters and the difference is that when people around Ireland see someone standing up and struggling against a wrong and struggling and fighting and winning – that is the way – that is the key to building the trade union movement and building roots in immigrant worker communities. I think there are outstanding issues that still need to be resolved that the trade union movement should take up. The role of Harney in bringing in GAMA – there is unanswered questions there – the role of the State and special tax concessions to this

company. Also, and if we are to be honest, the role of the unions as well. What were we not doing to allow this to go on because this was going on for years before it came out and it was outed by a Socialist Party TD, not by a trade union organiser. So we have to ask ourselves hard questions but one thing we have to get out is to say it was a stunning victory for unorganised workers that don't have the English language, can take on a multinational company, well it gives a lot of hope to people like us. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Conference, that is the end of the debate, on the common debate on Motions 1-6, so I am going to put Motions 1-6 to Conference. In the meantime can the mover and seconder of Motion 7 please come to the front so that we can move on.

Can I put Motion 1 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed unanimously, thank you.

Motion No 2 - those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed unanimously, thank you.

Motion No 3 - those in favour please show. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed unanimously, thank you.

Motion No 4 - those in favour please show. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed unanimously, thank you.

Motion No 5 - those in favour please show. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed - thank you.

Motion No 6 – Migrant Workers - those in favour please show. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed - thank you.

So, common debate Motions 1-6 all passed unanimously.

We are moving on to Motion 7 – Emigrants - in the name of the Cork Council of Trade Unions.

Colm Cronin, Cork Council of Trade Unions

Mr President, Congress on behalf of the Cork Council of Trade Unions, I move the motion on Emigrants. That Congress demands the full implementation of the *Task Force Report on Ireland and the Irish Abroad*. Delegates, under the PPF

the Government commissioned this report. Such was the haste at the time that it only took six months to complete it. When it was completed in 2001 it languished on a shelf in the Department of Foreign Affairs, gathering dust. Delegates, it is nothing but a shame on this Government but why should we be surprised. As a nation we owe a lot to our emigrants. Many of them helped their families, who remained in Ireland, by sending home generous amounts of money from their hard earned incomes. Many of the people who returned to Ireland have made significant contributions to learning and innovation. We must acknowledge the debt and recognise the sacrifices made by many generations of emigrants. The story of Irish emigrants is indeed mixed. Many have been very successful in their adopted countries at the highest level in politics, sport, business etc. These people deserve the recognition of what they have achieved. But for many this is not the case. Most if not all emigrants left Ireland because of the poor situation with their families, some never to recover.

What society does not realise is that in the region of up to 20,000 people still leave Ireland today for one reason or another. No part of Ireland has been left untouched by emigration, no family in Ireland, North or South has been left untouched. We now must put in place the measures and facilities that this report calls for, for not alone past emigrants but for future emigrants. Delegates, if we do not do this society that we know is sadly lacking in compassion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Delegate – could you give us your name again please.

Colm Cronin, Cork Council of Trade Unions

President, sorry, Colm Cronin, Cork Council of Trade Unions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Formally seconded.

I am going to put Motion No 7 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed.

Colleagues, we are running ahead of time and what I propose to do is that we still have a foreign guest, Jimmy Hoffa, AFL-CIO still to speak. He was due to speak later but because we are ahead of time he is just not in the hall.

I want to look at the potential to move on to tomorrow's business, which would be the continuation of the Economic Debate and the motions arising from that. This means that we will be slightly ahead of the agenda and for those who are experienced Conference goers usually find that if we go away early, and I am interested in your health, we would just go to the pub too soon, yes! So really what I want to do is to take some of tomorrow's business through. Standing Orders have no problem with us doing this. It also means that if we stay ahead of the game then it means that everyone who comes to that rostrum will have the full time allotted to them and that is what we normally do. Ok.

Is that agreed? Ok.

We are moving on. If you want to look at the business for Wednesday. It is a continuation of the Economic Debate and it will be followed by the presentation by David and then we will be going on to Motion 15 and Motion 16.

Technology is a wonderful thing. We are waiting on the computer to catch up which is good, so I have had two suggestions. I thought the Vice President would stand up and do the first song, you know!

Economic Debate including Public Services

(Motions 15-31)

(Principal EC Report reference: Section 2, Chapter 1 “Achieving Sustainable Growth”. Section 2, Chapter 3, “The Importance of the Public Realm”)

Ok, Conference we are ready to roll and could I introduce David Begg, General Secretary to introduce the debate.

Well, look at that David, he might sing this time!

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

Thanks, President. Sorry I was taken a little bit aback by the movements so what I want to try to do really in this presentation was just to set a context for the debate on the economy and to really put the proposition, I suppose, that Ireland both North and South has made very considerable progress in developing its economy but the question is, has society developed in parallel with that? And in order to come to that conclusion I want to look at some international developments, to look at the European context and to look at Ireland, North and South and to draw some conclusions from that. So I will start off with the global economy if I can.

The thing about the global economy is that is it expanding at the fastest rate for the last 30 years. If you look at the United States, for instance, the growth rate is 3.4%. China has the most rapid economic growth, although it has some weaknesses in its banking systems particularly and from the point of view of people doing business there about having contacts honoured. But realistically China is a giant. China is reshaping the world as we know it. I visited China myself about six years ago and around Beijing at that time there was one sort of M50 type motorway to cater for the traffic. There are actually now six motorways around it. China is an extraordinary phenomenon. The full impact of which I don't think is really realised in the world. Its development was cut off somewhere around the 15th century due to the decision by the Ming dynasty to more or less close it down to outside interests. But up to that time it had been one of the most technologically advanced in the world. I mean, as most people know, gunpowder was invented there but so also was the printing press. But anyway, after all that period of time it started to remerge again in 1978 and although there were some mistakes in terms of how China was managed, I mean crazy things like the leap forward where Mao had the idea that everybody would melt down iron in their back yard and so on. Things like that caused a huge problem for China.

Nevertheless, they had a green revolution in the production of food and they also had a huge investment in education and in the improvement of public health, so they have a much superior infrastructure if you like to build on than many of the other developing countries. And really they have been growing at around 9% per year from 1978 which means that the income of an ordinary person in China has more or less doubled every 8 or 9 years. So it is a phenomenal country. At the moment there is an issue say with the international textile quotas which have recently been brought to an end and as soon as that happened, the exports to Europe from China increased by 700% which nearly caused a complete panic in China, such that Peter Mandelson had to out and try to negotiate some kind of timeframe in which this would operate.

But the impact of China would not be just on Europe or in the United States. It will be on other areas of the development world where almost overnight, the textile business has effectively wiped out the textile business of countries like Bangladesh. So really the full impact of China is not known. Investment, Foreign Direct Investment there is growing at 26% per annum. It is growing at such a rate that the Government is actually trying to discourage it because really the country's economy is overheating and it can't manage the extent to which money is being poured into it. So it will emerge as an economic giant containing, you know, really not much short of 20% of the world's population so that you can see that what happens in China will completely reshape the world in the future and I don't know what it will be, I don't think anybody does, quite honestly, fully assess the impact of it.

Europe is enduring a certain amount of slow economic growth at the moment. It is considerably behind the US, running at about 1.8% and I will come back to that a little bit later. And Japan is more or less around the same, around 1.7%.

So just to move on then to the next slide if I can.

Ok, the risks then from a global economic point of view really are that first of all, the United States is running two major deficits on the fiscal side and on the trade side. It takes about a billion dollars a day to be fed into the United States effectively to maintain its rate of expenditure. Its trade deficit is about 6% of GDP, at the moment it's around, I think \$660 billion. It is expected to move up to about \$900 billion in a relatively short period of time. On the fiscal side it has a huge debt as well, caused by two facts I suppose really. One the spending which the Government is doing in prosecuting the war in Iraq and the other is that it has followed a policy of tax reductions for rich people, as Barbara Ehrenreich pointed out this morning in her contribution and as a result of course is trying to hammer social welfare provision and pension provision and so on. But the existence of those two huge – the twin deficits as they are called – would be absolutely unsustainable in any other country except the United States. And the only reason they are sustainable in the United States is that - the theory is at any rate - that the rest of the world can't afford for the United States to fail. So

consequently you have a position where people are buying up, particularly East Asian countries, large amounts of dollars. Most of the Central Banks of the East Asian countries would have huge reserves in dollars. So, of course, if the US dollar collapses as a result of the twin deficits then they are huge losers and they all need to stick together to prevent that happening. About three months ago the Bank of Korea attempted to wind down its dollar exposure by selling some dollars and it nearly caused panic on the international scene because there was fear that there would be a run on the dollar. Now if that happened you could have a sudden collapse of the dollar. That is possible and if that happened of course, it would have serious ramifications for the trading position of the rest of the world because goods imported to the United States would be that much more expensive.

Now you wouldn't think that as an issue at the moment because in the aftermath of the referendums being rejected in France and Holland, actually the euro has begun to wind down a little bit, but I think that this disguises the fact that the instability of the American financial system contains within it at least the potential for currency crises. And Paul Butler, who was the man who headed the Federal Reserve Board in the US before Greenspan, has in fact predicted that will happen within the next five years. So there is a huge risk from the United States in that point of view. The US economy is a very flaky kind of instrument at the moment.

The issue with China there is the fact that China has maintained parity with the United States in its currency so that a situation say in which the dollar went down, Chinese exports to the US should be more expensive than they are, but of course there is a big kind of row between the Americans and the Chinese because they feel that they are artificially maintaining this linkage with the dollar to ensure that Chinese exports are maintained quite high, so there is an issue there of sort of dumping.

The last risk comes from oil production capacity and price. The price of a barrel of oil today according to the Financial Times is \$60, which you know, in the space of less than a year, has actually doubled. But the problem with oil is not solely the difficulty of the reserves of oil, although that is clearly an issue. You can see in that slide there but if you look at the top green line – that represents the capacity to refine oil and there was a period of time there where you see that peak, where there was plenty of excess capacity but that is being used up now so that the gulf between production and capacity to refine is narrowing which means that even with new wells being opened and discovered there is a real difficulty in supply of oil coming onto the market. So they are probably the risks to the global economy.

If you look at the problems of Europe – I mean my personal view about Europe is that the problems of Europe are considerably overstated, for essentially political, ideological reasons. That is not to say that there are not problems there, there

are, but I mean it is important to keep them in perspective. The biggest one really is in relation to demographics in the sense that the combination of an ageing population and low birth rates means that, you know, the productive capacity of the European economies from labour sources, at least, is quite restricted and that there are real labour supply issues in Europe. Now there is a kind of a strange paradox in Europe in that there are high levels of unemployment, up to 10% in some countries, but yet there are labour supply problems arising from the demographic side of things and it has to do clearly with getting to a position where people in the labour force can come into the market. But even if you could get over that difficulty there, the ageing population and the birth rate means that immigration is a big and continuing factor in Europe for quite some time ahead.

But one thing which is rarely emphasised as being a problem in Europe is lack of demand and there are a couple of reasons for that. First of all because the ECB – the European Central Bank – maintains a very narrow perspective on its function which is price stability. In other words it gets apoplectic about the possibility about a 0.1% increase in the rate of inflation but cares little at all about the impact on employment. Now that, in fairness, is different from the remit of the Federal Reserve Board in the United States which is charged with managing the economy having regard to both price stability and issues such as employment. There is a big political argument in Europe that the European Central Bank should actually reduce interest rates to stimulate demand in order that there would be more purchasing going on in the European economy. Because only 12% of the trade in Europe is external to the European economy. The rest of it is totally internal. But the other factor is consumer confidence which is very, very poor in Europe. People are not simply spending money. Unlike the United States, you know when in the last few years in the US, because of low interest rates there, people re-mortgaged their property and they spent thousands and thousands of millions of dollars which had given quite a false sense, if you like, of buoyancy in the economy. But the Europeans are completely different. That is not happening there at all and there is a kind of a mutually exclusive problem for the policy makers in Europe. Like at one level they, as you know, constantly push out this thing that they have to oppose rigid labour, that flexible labour markets and reform of welfare policy on the one hand, and on the other hand they expect people to spend. What happens of course is this. If you keep pushing out a message of doom and gloom and you are telling people you might lose your job or that your welfare might be cut back or whatever, then of course they won't spend. So that you have to have confidence – you have to have confidence in the economy to spend so the people who believe in the liberal solution haven't cracked that problem. But what they really believe is that if you screw people for a while, that eventually everything will come right. That if you make them more flexible and if you make them, you know, reduce their social welfare entitlements and all of that, once they get over the pain of that they will say, oh, that was worth it, I am glad I did that so I will go back and spend money.

That is not a logical conclusion or a logical analysis to that problem at all. Really what needs to happen, frankly, is a couple of things – you need to have more security in terms of people's employment, you need to get the ECB loosening up and reducing its interest rates and frankly, European workers need to be demanding more pay. I don't know if any of you tracked the pay settlements in Europe over recent years, but they are appallingly bad. You know, you can't imagine the champagne corks being popped somewhere if they managed to negotiate a 1% kind of pay rise over three years or something like that. It is – the whole demand thing is very poor and very wrong and that is partially the problem there. It is not competitiveness per se. I mean Germany is one of the strongest, the strongest actually, exporting country in the world. It is the only one of the G8 economies which managed to increase its market share in the last couple of years. People here talk about competitiveness as a huge problem. It is not. By any standards the achievements of the German economy have been phenomenal. They have taken the hit of the reunification of the country and all that entailed and still managed to be a powerful exporting country. So presenting Germany as being a very weak country is absolutely wrong. You know, what problems it has to some extent are problems of trying to handle that reunification issue. And on the other hand the Scandinavian countries are amongst the top ten competitive countries – take any of the Scandinavian countries – they always end up in the Top 10 competitive countries. If America was to be compared with other European countries it would only come in as country number 5. So while there are difficulties in Europe without a shadow of a doubt concerning its rate of growth at the moment and concerning the level of employment, the type of solutions which are posited in my opinion are not the right solutions at all.

I should mention Italy, though. Italy is a kind of a basket case country in some respects in terms of its economic performance, but the real reason is that before Italy went to the Stability & Growth Pact thing for Europe in the first place, it had cooked the books anyway and what is coming out now is simply the revelation that was the case and that's why having a Prime Minister like Berlusconi to contend with wouldn't give you much confidence.

Turning back domestically to look at the Northern Ireland economy. The Northern Ireland economy is the fastest growing regional economy in the UK. Unemployment is actually, I think, under 5% at the moment from about 14% in the mid 1990's. But, as the Secretary of State mentioned this morning, one of the difficulties is that there are relatively high levels of economic inactivity here which makes the unemployment figure higher than it actually is. There are 186,000 women and 127,000 in 2004 who are not in the labour force and if you look at the way it is represented in that chart – the one in the middle is the kind of average of the women and men. The men are in the green there and the red are the women on the top and while you can see that the position is improving and converging a bit, there is still a big difference there. And if you look at what has happened the industrial sectors in Northern Ireland, you can see that manufacturing

employment has gone down very significantly – minus 13.4% while services employment has increased significantly as has construction but it hasn't been quite as bad as the UK where manufacturing employment has collapsed by nearly 30%. But it is a fact, you know, people talk like policy makers here, talk about the Northern Ireland economy being too heavily biased to the public sector and too small in the private sector, but reducing the public sector is not the solution to that. The size of the public sector is an important stability point in the Northern Ireland economy. What is necessary is to try to grow the private sector and in the last couple of weeks you have had Dr Tony O'Reilly and subsequently, I think, Goodbody Stockbrokers coming out and saying the solution to the Northern Ireland economy is to reduce the rate of corporation tax. Now I would say to the Government here is that you need to be absolutely aware of that – that is a vested interest agenda. I can't see it as a practical proposition how you would have different regional rates of corporation tax in the UK anyway, but Congress is very opposed to that idea of tax competition, as the net result of tax competition is that you reduce the amount of money that is available to the Exchequer to look after public services, so I would be very careful of advice like that. I think the solution in Northern Ireland is to sort of look at where is the competitive advantage by comparison to other European countries and it clearly is turning that difficulty of low participation rates in the economy into a positive factor and saying right, there are a lot of people here who in the right circumstances could work and that in itself should be an attractive point in terms of developing industry.

Just looking at that, what we in the Republic, call GDP per capita – it is called GDA in the UK, but while as I mentioned that Northern Ireland is one of the fastest growing regions of the UK economy, its in terms of GDA per head – a measure of wealth if you like – it is the third lowest I think after of the North of England. It is a relatively poor part of the UK and it also has the problem of pretty low wage development as well.

So, turning back to the Republic, the recovering growth in the last couple of years has been quite phenomenal – back to probably 6% I would say in reality, because these things are often underestimated, and it is likely that this will continue to the end of the decade. Inflation has come down to around 2.2%, 2.3% I think last month. It probably will begin to go up a little bit maybe but not too much. Unemployment down to 4.5%, about 4.4% and employment growth is 3% per annum. You have 55,000 new jobs created last year and relatively high levels of workforce participation – 55.5% of women which is just above the EU average and 74.7% of men which is somewhat above the EU average. It is clear though that labour supply in fact is an issue in the Republic and you have a situation here where if you looked at the composition of the jobs that were bought in last year, about a third of them were met by natural growth in the labour market, a third of them were met by women coming back into the labour force and if you were to disaggregate that participation rate for women, you would see

that in the younger cohort of women it is actually much higher than that. What distorts it a little bit is women in the older age group. But more of them have been coming into the workforce as well. And the third component, almost evenly divided, has been an increase in immigration.

Of the economic sectors in 2004, the manufacturing sector has not been good, and what's called the modern sector – the ICT and pharmaceuticals - has actually been minus 0.4%. But surprisingly, indigenous manufacturing has been relatively buoyant at a 3% growth rate and these are firms mainly, I suppose the biggest firms in manufacturing growing there would be in the food processing area, a lot of them who have been moving up the value chain, have been investing in R&D and have been creating higher market range products to meet new market requirements. Ireland has been troubled over most of its period of economic development by a very poor indigenous performance but that would seem to reflect that the indigenous industry is improving and indigenous industry is quite important in terms of its spread throughout the country, which I will come to in a minute. Tourism – a 3.2% increase – but visitors are expected to go up by about 5% this year. There are some problems of what appears to oversupply in some parts of the hotel sector at the moment because anyone looking around Dublin at the moment will see that if you pass a spot one day and come back the next there appears to be a new hotel built there. So the number of beds I think is the space of a couple of years has gone up from about 14,000 to about 50,000 overall so there has been huge growth in that sector and some elements like the Bed & Breakfast side of it has not done particularly well and of course that sector is substantially staffed also by foreign workers.

Construction remains extremely strong. There is a big expectation that construction would decline this year but it hasn't actually done so far. It accounts for about 20% of GDP and 12% of employment, and that continues to grow. It is very difficult for almost anyone to see anything wrong with the Irish economy at the moment

One thing which is quite interesting to look at – again I am not so sure how these come out – these are maps which were done by a Professor Walsh in Maynooth University and one of them is a picture of the manufacturing industry in Ireland. Just basically what it means is that the darker spots are where the heaviest concentration of manufacturing industry is and the lighter is where the least concentration is and it is quite interesting to look at just how evenly manufacturing is spread though the whole country of Ireland, so that it is of very great interest to manufacturing, to the people in rural Ireland basically, that it is available right around the country and not concentrated necessarily in urban areas. Similarly the construction industry is quite well spread around the country and in fact there is a view that as agriculture has declined, a lot of people have gone into the construction sector and there is a third which is interesting just to look at from, this is all a study of spatial strategy that the Maynooth University did, and that third one represents the concentration of where people live and it is

quite interesting. If you look at the towns of Cork and Dublin and Galway there on the map and see those dark rings around them – that represents the concentration of people living there and commuting into the cities mainly because house prices have been so high and people are trying to find housing that they can access, but you can see also that it is imposing a huge burden on people in terms of the amount of travelling they have to do every day. And it is a crazy set up from the point of view of the cities as well and you have a huge volume of traffic coming into them and clogging up the roads coming into them. The M50 is the most congested motorway in Europe at the moment which is hard to believe. Whereas if you were developing a city properly you would have high density residency in the city and you would have a good transport infrastructure to move people around. What we have at the moment is people coming in from outside with all of their cars clogging up the thing internally and no amount of good transport infrastructure internally will solve that problem.

The other thing which is interesting about both all three maps is if you look at them you see that in the areas around the border region that there are gaps in activity which must raise an interesting question for us about why could we not get a better synergy of economic activity between towns in the hinterland and on the border. That is something we have to be looking at as we go forward in terms of our policy development as a Congress.

What needs to change then to make Ireland a more acceptable society, I think a few things present themselves as being fairly obvious and I did mention this at the Special Conference we had in the Helix last year. First of all the whole business of public service provision and you can look at that at two levels. One the inadequacy of the public service provision at the moment and the second question is what is the country's position on the public services – a public realm as we say. What do we think the role of Government should be in the economy and naturally enough from a Congress point of view, we should think it should be quite high.

But as we know political opinion, particularly in the Government of the Republic now at the moment is the opposite at the moment. You have this whole argument about moving, say about health service provision out of the public sector and into the private sector and there is also then the future of the semi-state companies about which we have written fairly extensively in the report in terms of the model that the Executive Council has adopted, as a way of preserving the capital structure of the semi-state companies and preventing privatisation because it is obvious to anyone looking at the way policy is at the moment, that a policy of neglect on behalf of the shareholder will move those companies to a point where in order to access capital for the future, the only option for them to survive will be privatisation. It is not worth a curse getting up here and saying we condemn privatisation, unless we can actually articulate an alternative model which keeps them in the public sector but which allows them

access to capital and that is why we have spend so much time in the report setting out the new model that we have designed.

So defending public services, getting more investment into them, Ireland spends least of all European countries on its public services. 33% of our gross domestic product is what is spent on public expenditure. The European average is 47.5%. Now, I mean we are well behind that and you cannot have public services which as good as the rest in Europe unless you spend the same amount of money. So public service provision in all its manifestation must be a big issue for us I think.

The second is an infrastructure of caring – by which I mean that the growth of the economy has meant drawing people into the labour market and feeding this ferocious beast of an economy with more and more people, without any regard to the social consequences of that decision and in terms of quality of life that means an awful lot to people as people are put to the pin of their collar to access childcare and to pay for it. But not alone childcare – I mean there are huge problems now in relation to care of the elderly. We saw a little bit of that in the scandal of the Leas Cross Nursing Home, but that is only a small indicator of things to come as we become an aging population as well. Our demography is a bit better than Europe - one generation behind the norm as far as the rest of Europe is concerned but when all of us are on our zimmer frames we will be sorry that we didn't sort this problem. Because quite frankly, there is no provision for it all, and Congress this week and hopefully you will see it here, we have published a fairly comprehensive policy about caring taking into account childcare, care of the elderly and care of people with disabilities. It needs to be looked at in a holistic way and it needs to be financed.

The third thing is pensions and they have been referred to in the debate already, that so much has been wiped off the value of private sector pensions that there are a lot of people here who are sleepwalking towards an old age that is not provided for and that they will not have what they expect. It is the same in Northern Ireland, the same in the United Kingdom. The pension system is a real point of potential crises for the future.

In relation to industrial policy, we have to find a way of moving up the value chain in order that we can deal with this potential threat from globalisation, whether it is the power of the Chinese economy or whatever else it may be. So that means investment in Lifelong Learning. Above all we have to try to prevent this race to the bottom. There is no viability as far as Congress can see in having an industrial policy which sees us competing on the levels of wages which apply in some of the developing countries. There is no future in that whatsoever. But again to get there investment in training is extremely important. When we compare in of our industrial sectors the numbers of people who are at operative level and the numbers of people who are technicians and manager level, we do not come out particularly well. And while it has been recognised that investing in

research and development is a good thing, and Science Foundation Ireland has about €630 million every year, nothing like that is invested in training.

And lastly then, inequality in society. The cost of all of this economic development is good at one level but at another level we have a society where 20% of people are at risk of poverty and where we have the lowest social transfers of any European country and it would not be a good, I know some people are not in favour of social partnership, others are, and I am in favour of it myself, but coming out after a period of the next ten years if you were to find that the situation was like that, you wouldn't think it had been a great success.

So I suppose the question, colleagues, is this. Is that a reasonable platform for the trade union movement to advance on. That is the first question. If it is, how are we going to achieve it? And I think first of all, it is not possible to achieve it over a short period of time. As you know, we made affordable housing one of our key flagship social projects in the *Sustaining Progress* agreement and the President spoke about that this morning. And we are making progress on it but very, very slowly. And one of the things that emerged from that in trying to get the whole apparatus of Government behind something like that was that it takes a long time. It takes 4.8 years to get from the point where you have a green field site to the point where you have a house actually on it. So if you take that experience of public policy formation and delivery, and apply it to any of those things, it would be very foolish to come along and say that you could accomplish them in a three year framework. You may accomplish them in a seven to ten year framework.

The other thing is how is it to be paid for? There is absolutely no political consensus around this agenda in the country at the moment. There is a definite divergence of opinion between people who favour a low business tax environment economy and those who believe that these things have to be paid for. And if they have to be paid for there has to be some sensible way of matching tax and public spending in order that that can be done.

So they, I think, are the issues. It think it is a reasonable platform for us to go forward on. It does involve engagement in Government in some shape or form but it does also, I think, involve doing it on a different basis than has been done before. I mean, I think that if there is a criticism of the engagement we have had in the past, it may very well be that we have tried to do too much over too short a period of time and, in the end, not accomplished a huge amount on any one of those things on the social agenda. If these are the issues then, as I say, we need a more focussed approach to handling them.

So, I hope colleagues, that that would be of some assistance to you in terms of presenting what the analysis that the Executive Council has been doing and how we see the framework in which we may have to advance for the future.

Thank you for you for your attention.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, I am going to ask Jack O'Connor to move the next motion – Motion 15 on behalf of the Executive Council. Then I am going to introduce our speaker, James P Hoffa, and when Jim Hoffa has concluded then we will finish the Conference until tomorrow morning, starting with Motion 16. Is that ok? Ok, Jack.

Jack O'Connor, SIPTU (Executive Council)

President, delegates, good afternoon, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU moving Motion No 15 on behalf of the Executive Council.

The resolution before you, delegates, proposes the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy as it was originally intended to be pursued and not as it has been hijacked by those who are pursuing a strategy based on neo-liberalism. When this strategy was first adopted in March of 2000 by the European Summit in Lisbon, it fairly explicitly declared the EU objective to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and with social cohesion. And yet, in this resolution it has been very much necessary for us to resolve to fight to ensure that the achievement of the goals of the strategy is not allowed to become the property of neo-liberals zealots at the expense of the European Social Model.

This sentence utters the one key word that is central to the possibility of achieving and implementing the Lisbon Strategy in the manner in which this resolution proposes and that word delegates is “fight”. We have had enough experience over the past year of the necessity of such a fight at both European and national levels. For we have seen naked capitalism unashamedly operating in all its exploitative ugliness, aided and abetted by the powers that be, both at home and abroad. These experiences should have taught a lesson to any of us who are naive enough to think that what is euphemistically called ‘partnership’ or the lip service paid to supposed common objectives, whether in Ireland or Europe, had somehow put paid to competition and struggle between classes. On the contrary – never has it been more intense.

The ideology of the free market model is now in the ascendancy among many of the core policy drivers in Europe. Neoliberalism dominates much of the thinking in the European Commission not least in that of the Commission President himself. The result is that the social and environmental components of the Lisbon Agenda have been very much sidelined and the most glaring example of this was in the attempt to foist on the European Union a neoliberal charter in the

form of a totally unacceptable Services Directive. And while some respite has now been gained through the reference back of the draft directive to the joint examination by the Commission and European Parliament, the fight, delegates, is very far from being over. And all the more reason then for us to reaffirm the superiority of the European Social Model, not merely in terms of its social benefits but also in terms of its potential as a generator of wealth. We totally reject the poisonous ideology that insists on an unrestrained free market approach to economic growth, as a precondition for any social benefits that might subsequently trickle down from a totally emasculated version of the European Model that would be only nominally social. We once again insist on pointing out that the socio-economic cause-effect relationship works in fact the other way around. It was by insisting on the trade union movement's right to be fully involved in economic and social decision making over the past eighteen years that we achieved such historically unparalleled growth levels in Ireland itself. We therefore insist on the European agenda retaining and developing those core social values that have distinguished our post war development. Values that lie at the heart of the social democratic movement itself, but also in very much of the Christian democratic position as well.

It is time, delegates, to confront the neo-liberals with the stark message that there can be no further progress with the European project by attempting to jettison social Europe. And, indeed it was fear of that which contributed in no small way to the recent rejection of the draft EU Constitution in France.

That said, delegates, facing up to the challenge of resolutely pursuing the implementation of the European Social Model will not be an easy task. The problems of German unification were just a precursor of the problems that now confront Europe as a whole, on a far wider scale. How to develop an integrated social and economic process, that will weld the member states of both Western and Eastern Europe, in a balanced way that will not just be guided by the false promises of short term consumerist gratification. On the contrary, the challenge facing us is one of integrating new populations on a scale never faced before. Building on high levels of labour productivity and a balance of trade surplus of 50 billion Euros and reasserting the much misrepresented but more than ever necessary role of soundly-based state led investment as a key driver of economic growth, stimulating innovation and generating demand.

Coupled with this is the further challenge of prioritising the role of education, training and reskilling in a planned transnational strategy, on a scale exceeding anything accomplished by any economy on earth before. We must vehemently reject as bankrupt the so called alternative being pursued by the neoliberals of a race to the bottom based on tax competition and an intensification of exploitation of low paid workers from the East. Such a strategy, based on the most animalistic pursuit of the profit motive is destructive of society as a whole, has never delivered in the past, even in respect of nominal economic growth itself. And it certainly won't do so now. And while there is a fight to be pursued at the

level of Europe itself, delegates, we must particularly address critical issues on the home front as well. We must insist that the Government seriously tackle the challenge posed by a half a million workers in the Republic who do not possess a Leaving Cert qualification, in order that they might be properly equipped to share in the benefits of a rapidly changing economy rather than cast on the scrapheap of free market capitalism. We must ensure, delegates, that the Government does all it in its power to encourage those at school to remain there until completion. We must make sure that Lifelong Learning becomes an actual social reality rather than remain a chapter heading in a report. And if there are any here in this hall, delegates, who believe that this task can be accomplished or even served by diplomatic delegations to Government Buildings to Brussels, we are very, very wrong indeed because what we have on our hands is a fight on the scale of which the European trade union and social democratic movement has not had to face before. But the whole of civilisation, not just workers on this Island or other workers in Europe, depend on our success. We must go to it with vigour.

Thank you, delegates, I move the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, Jack. It is formally seconded on behalf of the Executive Council. Can I put Motion No 15 to Conference. Please show – those in favour, those against please show, abstentions. It is passed unanimously.

Can I thank David for his presentation which I think was a comprehensive analysis of not only the European scene but the scene in Ireland and the scene in Britain. I think it put the whole lot into context and I would like to thank Jack again for his contribution as well. I would also like to thank Paul Sweeney who has done quite a lot of work since he came into Congress on making sure that our economic analysis and economic papers are there in place for all of us to see. Ok, thank you.

Part of tape missing.....introduction of Mr James P Hoffa, AFL-CIO

James P Hoffa, AFL-CIO, Fraternal Address

Thank you very much for that very warm welcome. It has been a great three days here in Ireland. I want to thank you for all the hospitality we have been shown so far. I have had a chance to travel from Dublin to here – I have seen the beautiful country – it is wonderful. This is my first trip to Ireland and it won't be my last I can tell you that. And I have also had a change to meet many of the labour leaders and many of the people we have met on our travels and I am certainly impressed by the hospitality and the warmth of their welcome. I especially want to thank the ICTU President, Brendan Mackin, thank you for having me here. Vice President Peter McLoone, General Secretary David Begg and Northern Ireland Committee Officer Peter Bunting for this invitation and your warm welcome.

Delegates to Congress, brothers and sisters, and friends:

A great Irish-American labour leader, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, asked me to represent him at this Congress. John Sweeney and the entire AFL-CIO Executive Council send you the warmest fraternal greetings.

As you know, and many people have asked me about the debate going on in the American labour movement today and I want to talk to you about that. We are having a lively debate over the direction of the American Labour Movement and what our priorities should be in the AFL-CIO. Our debate is about the challenges we all face, both politically and against corporate opponents. It is about how we grow the American labour movement. We are having a lively and robust debate and that is healthy for the American labour movement and we hope to work it out at our Convention coming up. So I want to give you that report and I think that is important.

In the short time I have been here I have been impressed by the ICTU and the great work that they do. Every labour movement must struggle to maintain unity where there are differences. We in the United States can take a lesson from you. You have maintained trade union unity over two jurisdictions under the most difficult circumstances for decades.

While debate is good....it can also be stressful. You know we have had a lot of debate lately, a lot of Conferences, a lot of meetings in the United States, especially about our direction. So somebody suggested that I should come over here to Belfast where everybody gets along and I was assured by you, Brendan, that nobody ever disagrees in this great city. That is good news. I am glad to know that.

I share some Irish heritage, but I am also I joined in my trip today by 3 Irish-American that I have brought with me that I would like to introduce.

First of all, Dan Kane Sr., who many of you know, from New York. Stand up Dan. He is up there – he is now off the block.

And Dan Kane Jr., from New York, his son, just as active as he is, especially in Irish affairs;

And Ritchie Reardon, head of our large local in Boston. They are travelling with me and enjoying the hospitality. Thanks you.

Ireland has sent many of its sons and daughters to fight for the American labour movement – the Molly Maguires, James Connolly, Mother Jones and James Larkin. In fact, a great Irishman from County Clare was the President of the Teamsters Union for 45 years – Dan Tobin. He was the President of our union from 1907 to 1952. I wonder if I will last that long?

Today in the United States, we face the most anti-union Government and the most powerful capitalists in modern history. At the turn of the century, the United States was run by so-called “robber-barons”. They dominated everything and ran the Government. Well guess what, they’re back again. The “robber-barons” are back in the United States and they are back in Washington and New York. Today, our government is run by the Exxons, Enrons and Halliburtons of the world. They control the Congress and they control the Courts. The government is implementing an extremist agenda in domestic and foreign policy that the American people never voted for and do not support. This agenda is undermining workers' rights in the United States, and democratic rights of every American. It is undermining the social gains that the Americans have made over the past fifty years. The 40-hour work week is under attack in the United States. The right to organise is under attack. We are fighting for our lives to preserve social security, our retirement plan. 50 million Americans are without health care and real wages are falling if you compute all the differences. The average wage and benefit package in the U.S. is now below that of European model and compares more or less with Ireland.

But these are not just American problems. Globalisation makes them problems for workers across the world. These policies are bringing standards down around the world. We are bound together by a seamless global economy. So when we fight for worker rights in the United States we are also fighting for workers rights here in Ireland. And when you fight here in Ireland for workers rights you are fighting for us in the United States.

Our fight in the U.S. against unfair trade agreements is a fight that we must stop immediately because it promotes a corporate race to the bottom. It is a fight

against the rule of global capital. It is a fight for the democratic rights of working people. While our movements are different, our problems and goals are the same. We share the vision of international trade union unity. We share the goal of keeping good, middle-class manufacturing jobs in each of our nations. We confront the challenges of building labour unity in the face of a new wave of immigration. We are tackling the divisive and ugly consequences of racial discrimination. At the root, we are fighting the same battle. Big corporations do what they want, when they want, where they want, with no oversight or Government controls – Governments that should be reporting and helping working people are strangely silent. Talk to any trade unionist in any part of the world. The U.S. corporations that are mostly arrogant, and absolutely ruthless in the way they come into a country. They have no regard for the workers' standards. These companies learn to do it the old fashioned way in the United States because they are practicing on us!

In fact, I understand that Wal-Mart has now invaded Ireland with two new stores. Let me tell you about Wal-Mart. There is no worse enemy of working people the Wal-Mart. They even lock workers in stores. They fire workers for no reason. They pay low wages and provide no practical benefits. Take it from me they are a bad neighbour and don't shop at Wal-Mart. Look at what just happened in Canada. The food and commercial workers organised a store in Quebec. Wal-Mart's response was not to work with them but to close the store. They chose no store over the workers' democratic right to organise. This is a battle - the world's richest corporations must be stopped and we can do it together. Take a stand with me and let's stay out of those stores. Let's do it.

But American companies are not alone. We have found that European-based companies can be just as bad when they operate in the United States. There are many examples of European-based companies that have good relationships with trade unions in Europe but adopt the most extreme anti-labour positions when they operate in the United States. And we know that it doesn't take long for them to realise what they can do over there they try and bring back to Europe. There is only one way to deal with these companies, by strengthening international labour unity and action. We must work together.

In the Teamsters Union, we know that strong international labour connections are needed to succeed in organising.. Many of our employers are now based in Europe and on the continent. We are finding that we must work closely with our counterparts around the world to deal with companies like DHL, National Express and the global shipping giants. And our counterparts need our help when dealing with U.S. companies like United Parcel Service.

Our links with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions are growing and must grow deeper. Until recently our links were very modest, informal, and occasional. I pledge to you they will become better. We will be here, we will work with you and

we will make our position and our help to you permanent. We are here to help you and we help you back. Thank you.

A good example of how we help each other recently occurred not long ago when we had an issue with SIPTU, that a contract dispute with Archer Daniels Midland, a company that the Teamsters Union happens to have a lot of contracts with. They were having a dispute and couldn't seem to work it out. The dispute was in Cork so they called us up and said can you get us a meeting in the United States with the heads of ADM. We were able to do that and it certainly helped the situation and ended the dispute. That's the kind of cooperation we need all around. And we have to keep on working in other areas. We have to keep on making sure that we have to work together and we are going to do that.

The Teamsters Union, under Dan Kane Sr. have been long involved in Irish affairs. He was the leader of the campaign in the US in the 1980's to raise funds to help the striking British miners, Dan and his Teamster colleagues raised more money than any other labour organisation for the striking miners and he did it all himself. Good job, up there Dan, keep it up.

Another great example of cooperation was during our 1997 strike at United Parcel Service when over 200,000 Teamsters walked off the job. The Irish trade union movement was very important in our strategy back then when UPS was setting up service and account centres here in Ireland. At the time, UPS in Ireland was mostly non union - a threat to the standards of postal workers represented by the CWU. The CWU understood the importance of UPS and began to organise. The CWU and the Teamsters agreed to support each other in our endeavours. The CWU joined with unions from across Europe to support the Teamsters strike and to form the UPS World Council of Unions. The CWU came to Washington and sat in our negotiations in Washington - sending a powerful message to UPS that we are united, both in the United States and in Europe. And, all of this helped the CWU win recognition at UPS and expand their membership to new hubs. Today, the vast majority of UPS drivers, warehousemen, and administrative employees are represented by the CWU. And we support the CWU's ongoing efforts to organise the customer service and account centres.

The ITF has now formed a Council designed to bring together unions who are committed to organising and representing workers that go over international lines like UPS, Fed Ex, DHL, and TNT. These giant corporations operate globally and we must operate globally. DHL launched a \$1.4 billion U.S. expansion to penetrate the markets owned by UPS and Fed Ex. The Teamsters are now working with CWU, SIPTU and the German union VERDE to organise DHL. To date we have organised more than 13,000 DHL members in the United States and we are just getting started.

The ITF Council will meet later this year to lay out an action plan around DHL and the other strategic targets that are important to labour unions.

But the Teamsters Union is not just about package delivery. We have a union that has 1.4 million members. I like to say that we have a union that covers A to Z – Airline pilots to zookeepers. We have got them all. Also, we have benefited from our work with the Irish Trade Union movement in our dispute with Guinness, yes Guinness our favourite drink. While Guinness has good labour relations here in Ireland, when they bought a union brewery in Pennsylvania in the United States, they hired an American union-buster who went out and laid off more than 200 Teamsters who worked at their brewery. Through constant pressure and support from SIPTU, we have we have been able to make progress there to make sure that we get our people back to work. Finally they fired the union-buster and we are making progress. I've got good news for you – we are going to cancel the boycott of Guinness and you can all have a drink tonight.

We know you face many challenges here in Ireland and I want you to know that the American labour movement is fully supportive of the Irish peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. Labour's friend, Bill Clinton, helped advance the peace process at a very crucial moment. ICTU has done a tremendous job of working for peace and promoting economic and social justice here in Ireland. I am here on behalf of the American labour movement to let you know that we will continue to answer the call of the ICTU to stand and work together with you for equality and peace in Ireland.

In closing let me quote from a great American, an author of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin put it very, very simply. "If we do not hang together - we will most assuredly hang separately. "These are the words the Teamsters Union lives by. It is what has allowed us to survive and thrive for more than 100 years. Together we can build better lives for working families from Belfast to New York, from Dublin to Los Angeles.

Thank You and God Bless You.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President.

Well colleagues I think that you will all agree that that was a pretty inspiring speech. It also puts into context the difficulties that are faced by our colleagues and friends within the American Trade Union movement. It also flags up the warning to us, and I think that warning has been flagged up on a number of occasions, that the agenda as led by the neo-liberals and indeed the robber-barons, as Jim has said, is certainly not an agenda or a road we as an organisation want to go down, will go down or will go down easily. OK, on behalf

of the ICTU I thank yourself and your colleagues in the AFL-CIO. Thank you very much.

James P Hoffa, President of Teamsters Union

Thank you, thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can I also extend our welcome to the friends and colleagues of Dan Kan, Ritchie Riordan and young Dan Kane. If anybody sees young Dan Kane, Jesus, he is about nine foot, he is you know. So welcome again to Jerry Zellhoefer as well. Jerry is a regular visitor the ICTU Congress and again on behalf of the ICTU, thank you, thank you very much.

I can I just conclude with a few items. We have got stands here which are in the hall which are organisations and Government departments and business who have put stands up. We would encourage delegates that while out having a coffee to use the stands, look at the information and indeed some of the information is very, very useful to ourselves as trade unionists and I think also these people contribute and make a contribution to the cost of this Conference, I would like to see people out there using it.

Also, there is a bus shuttle for all the hotels, or largely all the hotels, and a bus will be leaving to come to the Waterfront Hall for Conference. It is on the ICTU Notice Board outside so again I would encourage people to use the bus.

For those who are going to the dinner in Belfast City Hall tonight – it is being hosted by the Lord Mayor who we met this morning. People should also understand the significance that the Lord Mayor himself although not a trade unionist but he would be a member of the Democratic Unionist Party, who in the eyes of many people may not have seemed to be very friendly or something to the trade union movement, I think you'll find that none of the individual members are, I think that we should be, for those that are not going to the dinner, our apologies. It is just that there are so many tickets and we had to allocate them accordingly. So for those who are going be there tonight for 7.30 for 8.00pm for that dinner and I think we will enjoy it.

Ok, colleagues, we will start tomorrow morning – hold on, hold on, sit down, sit down for Christ sake, sit down.

We will be starting tomorrow morning with Motion No 16 on Privatisation from the ATGWU. That will be a sight seeing Mick O'Reilly up at 9.30 in the morning!

Also, colleagues, there is a fringe meeting in the Waterfront from 5.30 to 7.00pm tonight. It is a public discussion about the future relevance of the Lisbon Strategy. There is a panel discussion with Q&A from the audience afterwards. It is chaired by Wendy Austin, who is a local leading reporter on BBC. We have John Doyle who is from the European Commission, Rheiner Hoffman from the ETUC, John Simpson, who is a leading economist but who also writes for the Belfast Telegraph, David Begg from Congress and Sir Samuel Britton from the Financial Times. I think he is a brother of Leon Britton who was the ex-Tory Minister, Minister for Finance. So I would encourage as many people as possible to go. It will be a good debate, relevant debate, and I think helpful for us as an organisation.

So good night Conference. Thank you for your cooperation. We will see you in the morning at 9.30am.

Wednesday 22 June

Economic Debate including

Public Services

(Motions 16-31)

(Principal EC Report reference: Section 2, Chapter 1 “Achieving Sustainable Growth”. Section 2, Chapter 3, “The Importance of the Public Realm”)

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, I call on the Chairperson of Standing Orders, Kay Garvey to give a Standing Orders Report No 3.

Kay Garvey, Chairperson of Standing Orders

Good morning Mr Chairman, fellow delegates. Standing Orders Report No 3.

The Standing Orders Committee wish to inform delegates that John Tierney has withdrawn his nomination for election to the position of Vice President, therefore two remaining candidates, Rosheen Callender and Patricia McKeown are deemed elected unopposed.

Standing Orders Committee wish to inform delegates that Barney Lawn has withdrawn his nomination for election to the Congress Executive Council, therefore the thirty remaining candidates are deemed elected unopposed.

There is therefore no need for elections on this occasion.

Standing Orders Committee wishes to inform delegates that the Galway Trades Council has withdrawn Motion No 49 on Public Holidays.

Standing Orders wishes to inform Conference that a further Standing Orders Committee Report will be given to Conference on the state of proceedings tomorrow morning. This report will detail how the remaining business of Conference is to be concluded.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, Kay.

Colleagues, yesterday morning I also asked people to make sure that they have their mobile phones turned off so will you please do so. And also to thank Conference yesterday for adhering to the time when they were speaking, both when they were moving and seconding motions. And I would like to see this continuing through because again we have got a wide order of business to do and we have a number of guest speakers that we have to accommodate as well.

I want to call on the Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union to move Motion 16 on Privatisation.

Brendan Ogle, ATGWU

Brendan Ogle, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union moving Motion 16.

Almost 20 years ago I was one of tens of thousands of young Irish people seeking work in the United Kingdom. During those years, we witnessed first hand the privatisation of services including telecoms, railways, water, health, education and electricity. Indeed, had it been possible the Tories would have bottled the air we breathed and sold it back to us. The British public were told that this was in their interests. That competition and deregulation would benefit consumers. That it was the way forward. Competition became the accepted dogma to the extent that the benefits of this process to consumers are now seldom even debated or questioned. It is not intended as a criticism of the British trade union movement to state that they failed to stop this process when faced with a hostile Government, supported by new and regressive anti-trade union laws.

In southern Ireland the State still maintains a significant interest in public service provision, through state owned bodies on behalf of consumers and citizens. Nevertheless, however, the attack is now on. Our Government is propped up by a party which retains the support of 3% of the electorate. This support is at a cost. This Government has already sold off its interest in telecoms and investors and consumers have gotten badly burned. We as a movement have not stopped this. In fact some of our number have become very rich as a result of it. Our airports and airlines are under attack with the Government having achieved radical changes to work practices on the backs of our members to make Aer Lingus profitable, now preparing to sell off the biggest portion of the company. We have not stopped this either.

Our state owned electricity provider, ESB, is a successful company returning healthy dividends annually. Our members have worked hard to make it so. But now even this success is to be used as a stick with which to beat us. Success is relabelled as dominance and thereby becomes a problem to be addressed through regulation and ministerial review. In January 2005, ESB presented trade unions with plans to divest themselves of 500 megawatts of output. That is selling two or three power stations to you and me. This was to be done to help their competitors in the marketplace. In other words, ESB proposed giving its competitors a leg up. The unions involved walked away. But always good for an original idea, the Minister for Energy, Communications & Natural Resources, Noel Dempsey, commissioned a consultant's report, supposedly into the energy market. It is no such thing. It is an investigation into why ESB is successful and how it can be broken up to suit outside investors. This report will be published in the early winter. I predict it will propose the break up of this company and the selling of many of its most valuable assets. That is what the dogma requires. This is not to benefit consumers. Indeed much of the rise in electricity prices to domestic consumers in recent years has been imposed through regulation to increase profit margins and therefore encourage reluctant investors into a small market that they have showed little interest in. This is all paid for by consumers in the name of competition.

How are we to respond to this challenge? In any social partnership talks that may emerge in the autumn are we going to make the maintenance of companies such as this in state ownership a prerequisite to our participation, or are we going to exchange our members' jobs, terms and conditions for shares. Are we going to fight this agenda or are we going to pass motions such as this and then pay lip service to them while donning the mantle of innocent bystanders.

In 1997, a Labour Government was elected to the UK but by then the damage had been done. This is our time. This is our struggle and this our fight. Let us embrace it and let us win it. I move Motion 16.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder? Patricia, are you seconding this.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON

Yes. President, delegates, Patricia McKeown, UNISON to second Motion 16. It is straightforward, its unambiguous, it says that this Congress is opposed to privatisation. That has been our position for some time. However, we recently saw the definition of the Irish Government on privatisation. Their definition is its not privatisation if the assets stays part of the State. However, they don't talk about people. And I want to pay tribute to Congress for an excellent two day

seminar on privatisation held in Mullingar just a few short weeks ago and to Liam Berney, in particular, for putting that together. Because one of things that was absolutely clear to those of from the North when we listened to the experience of our colleagues from the South, was that the experience is identical. Any public private partnership which includes the transfer of people is privatisation and the transfer of people is something which is happening on a large scale in the Republic of Ireland and the transfer of people is what the current UK Government is committed to, particularly here in the North.

Here in the North where they have earmarked 20% of investment for privatisation, 10% in the UK, 20% here. Another thing this motion is unambiguous about is that privatisation has adverse impact. And adverse impact arises principally from discrimination. And discrimination is what the people I represent and the communities their public services serve have suffered since 1988, first on a Thatcherite programme of privatisation and now on a Blair programme of privatisation. And it really doesn't matter how many Government ministers come to speak us and tell us about their trade union credentials and tell us about how much they are our friends and supporters, if they continue with policies which wreck our people and wreck our services.

I think we have got to reaffirm today that this Congress is totally opposed to privatisation and to do what the motion says – back in every way possible all unions who are fighting it. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

John. Can I have the movers for Motion 17. What I want to do is take the two together and then you will have a common debate for anybody.

Waterford Trades Council. If there is a seconder for Waterford Trades Council would they come to the front please.

Dick Roche, Waterford Council of Trade Unions

Dick Roche moving Motion 17 on behalf of Waterford Council of Trade Unions. I suppose not to repeat what the last speakers have said, I would like to take up on the report, a wonderful report we got on the state of the economy yesterday from the General Secretary. And one of the points he was making was that, you know, we can just merely oppose privatisation but on the other hand we do have to find ways to fully fund a public services. I just came up with a few suggestion on how the Government might find the money to fund these services.

Number one, they might try and stop wasting 60 million euro on white elephants such as e-voting. Number two, they might stop spending 1.2 billion on private consultants like they did last year and use the civil servants to do this. I have even a better one – they might try to get the rich people in this country to pay some tax like the rest of us. And I have a better one again – the people in the Oireachtas might take the same pay rises that the rest of us have to settle for as well.

Delegates, I just want to give one example that is close to the Waterford Council of Trade Unions when it comes to privatisation and we believe very much that privatisation comes from gaps which are being left in our public services. If there was no waiting lists in hospitals there would be no one talking about privatisation. If our schools were not run down there would be no one talking about privatisation. If you look at the example of the radiotherapy issue that is going on in the South East for a long time now and Waterford Council of Trade Unions have been to the forefront here - there is a motion coming up later on it - if you look at that issue Government policy in the first instance said that the people of the South East did not have the population to have a radiotherapy facility. There is now private speculators coming into build radiotherapy facilities. It was a gap that was left by Government policy and now private speculators are coming into exploit it. A vote for Motion 17 is a vote in the first instance for fully funding public services and I hope that the delegates support it unanimously. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Have we got a seconder? Waterford Trades Council, seconder from Waterford Trades Council formally? Ok. Thank you. Speakers on motions come forward. Speaking to Motions 16 and 17.

Albert Mills, ATGWU

Conference, President, Albert Mills, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union speaking in support of Motions 16 & 17. Anyone who needs a wake up call on the affects of privatisation got it from guest speakers yesterday, Barbara Ehrenreich and Jimmy Hoffa. In the United States privatisation has led to the increase in poverty and depredation amongst middle and working class people. How then is it that the Blair Government is hell bent on promoting the agenda in the name of socialism? Peter Hain stated yesterday that we must be careful not to let a right wing Government be elected in the future. I would say that to move 1,600 water workers from the public service to the private sector, to move hundreds of school support staff to the private sector through PPPs, to privatise the car parks and introduce clamping and to attack benefits is an agenda any right wing Government would be proud of. During the election the spectacle of Michael Howard and Gordon Brown entering a Dutch auction on how many

public civil servants they could get rid of was disgraceful from a Labour Chancellor.

Conference, there is a role for the private sector but it is as an enabler and the employer and not at the expense or the demise of the public sector. I would urge Conference to support these motions and I pay tribute to all of the Regional Secretaries and Congress and their opposition and we need to mobilise the people out there because it is the politicians that will change this. The people who stand and say they are against privatisation, we have got to make them accountable. Support the motions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Nuala Conlon, UNISON

President, delegates, Nuala Conlon from UNISON supporting Motion 16. UNISON opposes privatisation in all its forms. Over the last few years we have seen the results of privatisation in the three private finance initiatives schools in Belfast where the cleaning and school meal staff were sold off as part of the package. Currently we are in the middle of fighting both the Department of Education and the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) who appear to be determined to privatise cleaners and caretakers in the next eleven PFI schools. However, another proposal has just emerged from the Department and the SIB: the privatisation of all school cleaning and caretaking staff across the North. Almost 5,000 workers just like that. Whilst the Belfast Education Board cleaning service was in 10 Downing Street two weeks ago receiving a public service award together with London Buses, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, with the SIB were confirming their proposal to privatise them. Or to quote them: "outsource facilities management services."

Who are these workers? They are low paid, part-time women workers. Peter Hain, the Secretary of State, spoke at this Conference yesterday of a partnership and of a different approach taken by the Direct Rule minister, Angela Smith. We are saying that she better approach this proposal to privatise cleaners and caretakers by telling the Department of Education where to go. We will not be standing by to watch 5,000 school cleaners across the North being sold down the river to Maben, Compos, Sodexo or whoever wants to profit out of the deal. I support.

Shay Cody, IMPACT

The proposers of the two motions said that we need to move beyond just adopting these motions and develop a strategy, and in that context IMPACT welcomes the initiative by the Congress Executive for the development of a State Holding Company as a means to secure investment in state companies in the Republic. We see the proposed establishment of a single holding company to take investment decisions for twenty-six separate commercial state companies as the only practical means of moving beyond the investment strike currently being waged by the Government. The Congress proposal would give the companies greater commercial independence including the ability to raise capital for expansion. Crucially it would also keep them in public ownership and control. Under current EU rules, the state is only allowed to invest in its own companies if it meets the prudent private investor principal. To you and me this means Governments can only inject cash if the EU thinks it is sensible, if a private citizen or company would make the same investment. Put bluntly, the prudent investor principal means that the State is not allowed to bail out companies in financial difficulties. This is why our Government could not help Aer Lingus during the crises that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks, although the rules do not prevent a State cash injection to meet the company's current long term investment needs. This clear and simple approach has been muddled by Government and commentators who don't want to see any State investment at all. The reality is that Government refuses to invest when its allowed to and is not allowed to invest when it needs to.

IMPACT welcomes the comments by the Minister for Transport, Martin Cullen, that the state is committed to investing in Aer Lingus in order to retain the crucial 25% shareholding in the event of further rights issues or dilution events. This is an important strategic commitment. However, it does raise the question to why it is possible to invest in the future but not the present. IMPACT also welcomes a proper debate on the future of state companies. Despite our reservations on the approach towards Aer Rianta, the fact is that the Government has resolved to retain the airports in state ownership. If we could go back in time no doubt the Government would not have sold the telecoms infrastructure. However, the recent political shambles over the future of the airports reinforces the need to move away from the existing political model of ownership towards the holding company concept and in that context we back both motions. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thanks Shay, next speaker.

Marian Gilmore, UNISON

President, Conference, I am a privatised health worker in the Greenpark Health Trust. I have fought against privatisation for years but in the dirty deals done by the National Health Service, the Trust and Government, I have been privatised now three times. All of this has happened despite a massive campaign by our own union. The latest privatisation was this year and happened because civil servants lied to the Direct Rule minister but it is not over yet as we are currently balloting for strike action. Why should health service workers have to use our energies fighting exploitation and poor standards? The Government should hang its head in shame. For nearly 20 years now our union has had to devote its resources to fighting privatisation. We have the least privatisation here not by accident but because of resistance. I am one of the unlucky ones but we won't give up. We will also be part of the fight to save our colleagues in school cleaning. I don't want other workers to live through the experience I have. We support the motions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council

Eamon McKenna, Derry Trades Council in support of both motions. The proposers of both motions made the very obvious and valid point that it is necessary not simply to oppose privatisation as a matter of ideology and in terms of resolutions at Conferences like this, but in practical terms and to campaign against privatisation in a way that has got some potential for success. I believe that that is at the heart of the matter and that necessity for such campaigns are illustrated particularly at the moment in the North, a, in the proposed water privatisation and perhaps even more so in the proposed privatisation referred to by Nuala Condon of UNISON of between 4 and 5,000 jobs in facilities management. That is to say in caretaking and catering and so forth right across our schools. I have long taken it on board that that this is going to apply under the proposal to all schools right across the North and not simply schools involved in other PFI schemes as there aren't just single privatisation developments in the 17 year in glorious history of privatisation in the area. But the differential affect as you mentioned on women – that it is women who are concentrated in those jobs, because all statistics show that women do about 30% better off in the public sector than in the private sector for these equivalent jobs. One of the reasons that the public sector is of course hated by the people who are hell bent on privatisation, I would venture to say that if we are predictable that such a measure would impact differentially on a section of the workforce identified not by gender but for example by religion, if it were Catholics who were predictably or Protestants who were predictably to be disadvantaged, there would be uproar in

this society about it. It wouldn't stand. Why isn't there uproar about this – why aren't there political parties taking this up?

I believe it is up to our trade unions to do it. The reason why conventional political parties don't do it is also very obvious. It is that such an issue and such a campaign would not fit neatly into a pattern of politics which is dictated by communal identity and it undercuts the basis on which our conventional politics are constructed. Therefore, it is up to us approaching the issue on that basis and that front, we can I believe ignite a real campaign among the wider public and defeat privatisation. That ought to be our aim and we should take seriously the appeals from the proposers of both motions to pass these resolutions and not simply to indicate our attitude, but as a token of our determination practically to go out there and to rouse society against these proposals. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Madeline Spiers, INO

Good morning delegates, President, Madeline Spiers, Irish Nurses Organisation. This is an issue that is very close to our heart. We ran a very successful campaign in the INO in the month of April where we really raised the pole to ICTU. This is an issue – privatisation is here to stay. It is not coming down the road, it is already here. The 2001 McCreevy provision for 60% tax relief has led to a budgeting of private hospitals, private clinics, private nursing homes. We see the result. At least in private nursing homes there is provision in legislation even though it is not utilised that they can be reviewed twice yearly and there is some public audit. In private hospitals there is no access. When I hear, with all due respect to Larry Goodman, that he is investing in private hospitals in the South, alarm bells go off in my head.

In *Sustaining Progress* agreement was made that there would be a health strategy and it would be publicly funded and it would be there for everybody, when we are young and when we are old. And as nurses we have seen not only the nursing profession run down and rubbished but we have seen service to the public, to you, to your family, to your mothers, to your fathers run down. If we don't have a response, and it is not up to the health unions to do that, it is up to ICTU and it has to be done, and I would call for public demonstrations come September and no entrance into a new *Sustaining Progress* until key issues, as many speakers have said here, are addressed. Thank you.

Roy Hallissey, Waterford Trades Council

Roy Hallissey, Waterford Trades Council speaking in favour of Motion 17. Both North and South you have Governments who are committed to neo-liberalism and privatisation of public services. The Government in the South have so slavishly followed new liberal economic policies that we are the most globalised economy in the world. An economy run in the interests of multi-national corporations. Both Governments, North and South, are signing up to GATT, a general agreement on trade and services which openly and explicitly calls for a privatisation of all public services. Time and again the Government tell us that through the initiative and the efficiency of private companies we save public funds. How many times have private companies been bailed out by taxpayers' money. We are also told that the private company is more efficient in running these services. In 2003 the combined profits of all the semi-state companies in the South was €500 million. This is about the same amount eircom has lost since it was privatised. Privatisation has been a disaster wherever it has been tried. Jobs have been slashed, wages have been cut, conditions are lessened, safety and services are sacrificed in the interest on profit. How many people have died on trains in Britain since the privatisation of British Rail because of cutting of cost and cutting down on safety. Busses in the UK are controlled by three multinational corporations. Fares have risen by 87% since privatisation. Unprofitable routes have been cut. The average age of busses is 30% higher than it was before privatisation. Hospitals, schools, roads, transport, bins, water, post all face privatisation of one sort or another, in both the North and South. Look at the companies we are bringing in: Jarvis, a company which was found criminally responsible for the Potters Barn Rail Crash in Britain that killed nine people, is building primary schools in the South. Halliburton - Dick Cheney's old company which is more or less running the illegal occupation of Iraq - is building roads in the South. It is up to the trade union movement to protect public services, to protect the jobs and conditions of workers in the public services and to fight privatisation.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague.

I am going to call on votes on Motions 16 and 17. Those in favour of Motion 16 please show. Those against, abstentions. It is passed.

Motion 17 - those in favour please show. Those against, abstentions. Ok, it is passed.

Thank you delegates. Moving on to Motion 18 - Privatisation, which has an amendment to it by NUJ.

Eoin, are you agreeing the amendment?

Eoin Ronyane, CPSU

Yes, Eoin Ronyane, Civil and Public Services Union. The CPSU is quite happy to accept the amendment from the NUJ.

I move to propose the motion. We have just had a considerable debate about privatisation and I think we would see our motion and those that have gone before in the context of the Executive Report yesterday and the importance of the public realm, which recognises the shift that has taken place since the 50's. The working class has emerged as the middle class and that has been characterised by a greater level of individualism and self interest, and it is a critical challenge for the trade union movement in terms of how it represents its own policies and its own future within that changed environment. In fact it was refreshing to hear an American come to a Congress of Trade Union's Conference yesterday and talk about the class struggle, something that we have become somewhat inclined to dismiss or play down. It was a very important debate yesterday and she underlined that in her speech. I thought the contribution was particularly pointed and important for us to take on board. The US experience and that of our colleagues in the UK and many of the unions here today have first hand experience of working in the UK market. It is dominated by the 'rich get richer and the poor so what'. And unfortunately the drive towards a greater middle class has led people to believe that individual pursuit of riches is far more important than the collective good and that is a challenge that we must face. And it is the challenge into which the public sector and the semi-state companies fall very neatly. They have played a critical role in the development of our economy and our society. And it should not be portrayed as a public versus private worker debate. It is far more significant than any issue to do with sectors within the trade union movement. It is critical to the well-being and development of our community, to the defence and the protection of citizens of a democratic state.

Members of our movement have played a critical role in the development of the semi-state companies in the South such as the ESB, Bord na Mona, Telecom Eireann, Aer Lingus, An Post, RTE – we could go on. When nobody wanted to invest in these industries, when nobody would provide them and the money was not there from the private sector, the State stepped into breach and delivered the services to our people. And that is a principle which we must stand by and must not apologise to stand by. We have seen somewhat of a debacle in eircom. We have members in eircom. We have seen these companies being forced to live in a market economy as the report yesterday clearly defines for us. We have seen that the loyalty in the private sector is to profit, to earnings per share. The service quality and the delivery of the service to the public comes

second to the principle that earnings per share is what you should judge a company's success on.

That cannot be the principle by which we judge public services and semi-state companies. We call on Congress to stand firmly behind the concept of public service and to the right of the State on behalf of its citizens, to engage in commercial activity in semi-state companies where they provide services which are critical to our communities going forward.

We are facing a challenge with the current administration and it is ironic that Fianna Fail as a political party were in many ways the father of many of the public sector companies that we deal with. That under the light touch politics of the PDs and the standing back from the involvement in the economy, we are faced with the political dilemma at the moment. We are engaged in a social consensus process for the last number of years which puts us into direct contact with a Government which currently does not share our views as a trade union movement on the future of state companies and of the public services staying within public ownership. We must continue to defend the State right to involve itself in those companies, particularly where the services are of direct and important benefit to the citizens.

Semi-states are about making the lives of ordinary people that little bit better and we must remain loyal to that core purpose. In the modern social market even, the financial implications have been identified by Shay. Public service companies can have investment from the state provided they are within the market norm. We have got to look at the important elements that are provided by those companies and find a model which allows us to invest in them – particularly in the case of An Post which is of critical importance to my union at the moment. An Post has a very central universal service obligation and delivers that to the community across the length and breadth of the country. It is not a service that the private sector, which is soon going to develop an interest in the postal market to a greater degree than it already has through deregulation, will not step into the breach. There is no profit in delivering a letter from Dublin to the depths of Clare Island, but it is a service that every state must have and we must defend it. And in particular we must not allow our workers and members in the postal services to subvert the costs of universal service obligation. That is the responsibility of the state – we must say it and we must demand that it be delivered.

Colleagues, we support the debate within Congress of finding a mechanism to support active participation and support for public service companies and for the semi-state companies but we equally say very clearly, that a message must continue to go from this trade union movement, that we support the motion of public service companies, we support state enterprise and we will stand by that as a trade union movement going forward and we will not allow ourselves be deflected into a debate between public and private membership.

Thank you, we support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Secunder?

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

Terry Kelleher, CPSU seconding the motion. The motion says we resist, it doesn't say we oppose and I think we have to move on. I don't think that there is anybody in this room, or maybe there is but they won't openly say whether they agree with privatisation. The question is can it be resisted? Now the consciousness of our members about the public services and the role it plays and the importance of it and how it is funded has been pushed back. Union members, and even some activists – quite a layer of activists, have less of an understanding of privatisation, what it means, what are the motives behind it. And therefore when it happens and it has happened and it continues to happen, its relevance is lost. This needs to be addressed. We need to tackle this. I mean we have to be honest with ourselves.

Some of these debates, we are dreaming sometimes. Because as we come up here and say we are opposed and the rich tradition of our movement opposes privatisation, it is happening and we are going back into unions and we are doing nothing about it. Let's be honest. And we have to have an honest debate about this. There are unions up here speaking saying they oppose privatisation and they know nothing about it in reality. And there is a question now, the real debate is honestly people should get up here and say whether we are capable of stopping it or not. I think we are. I think that the argument that money is not there to provide funding for Aer Lingus and that's an argument to look into the private sector, is just that an argument. But I think this is the flaw in Paul Sweeney's document. He is just dealing with that argument and he is actually trying to convince us that that argument is the crux to the privatisation monologue that we are facing. It is not – it is an ideological and political process agreed between Fianna Fail and the PDs and we have to tackle that idea and that ideology and unfortunately, over the last vast period we have been on the defensive on this issue. But I think we are in a new period. I think that things are changing. We only have to look at Britain and the US where there are real live examples of how privatisation is at, best, unsuccessful and at worst a disaster. In water, energy and transport there are real live issues that we should be shouting from the mountain tops about the difference between running a service on a profit driven basis and the consequences for the fabric of society and running it based on need and social need on that basis.

Comrades, we should stop dreaming and pat ourselves on the back on the rich ideas and how right we are about opposing privatisation – that is a waste a of time. We have to take action, we have to resist it not just verbally oppose it.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Seamus Dooley, NUJ

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists moving the amendment. In doing so, could I first of all say that this morning is an important day for this movement. I don't think we should stop dreaming at all. This morning we elected two female vice-presidents and a record number of women on our Executive – that is one dream realised that we should applaud.

We fully support the sentiments expressed by Eoin Ronayne and in particular wish to express solidarity with the campaign for those who would attack An Post.

I want briefly to deal specifically with the issue of public service broadcasting. Louis Armstrong once said that if you had to ask what jazz was you weren't capable of understanding. I think public service broadcasting falls into a similar category. It would be very difficult in the short time available to define public service broadcasting. But if I mention to you the exposure of nursing home scandals, if I mention to you the work of Prime Time, then I think you know what public service broadcasting is about. Because you certainly won't find it on TV3 – that anti-union employer which fumbles of the greasy till and only wants to treat communications as a mechanism for making money. Broadcasting is about more than that. We do not accept, and we can never accept, that the right to broadcast, the right to information is purely an economic activity and the attack on public service broadcasting, North and South, and throughout Europe is coming from those who practice a theology, a PD theology which in Ireland might be described as a particular political form of 'maryeology'. But the fact of the matter is, I am a bit slow, the fact of the matter is that throughout Europe there is a campaign which says that public service broadcasters do not have a right to access to the internet. They don't have a right to do anything other than make programmes that nobody actually wants to watch. The idea is that in some way there is a process where those who want to make money make programmes that people will watch and that we allow the public service broadcasters to do boring things. Public service broadcasting is essential in a democracy. In the South, RTE on a daily basis is assailed by TV3 and others who time and time again try to use regulatory forces to prevent the development of RTE. Throughout Europe

there is a campaign to stop public service broadcasters from developing online technology. In Northern Ireland we have witnessed, at a very impressive level, the resistance of BBC workers to the dumbing down of the BBC. Public service broadcasting is directly related to the debate that is taking place today. We don't think of public service broadcasting when we think of other essential services but you will miss it when it goes, but we won't let it go.

I move the amendment.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. We are moving to the vote on Motion 18 as amended. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Thank you – it is passed.

Moving to Motion 19, ESBOA on semi-state.

Tony Dunne, ESBOA

Tony Dunne, ESBOA. President, delegates, while this particular resolution appears separately from the other four resolutions which we have had before, we actually see them more or less in the same way and therefore we fully support the tenor of the debate which went beforehand.

I think it is a good starting point to take Congress's policy which was put together by Paul Sweeney, because I think it forms a basis for us going ahead. One of the difficulties that we have had is that we have continually passed resolutions which oppose privatisation but effectively we have been dealing with a piecemeal basis as particular crises arise and I don't think we have a chance of success if we keep following that particular road. For my own part obviously coming from the ESB the difficulties within the ESB unions have been well documented and well chronicled on a daily basis. It is, however, true to say that on this particular issue of opposition to privatisation and defence, if you like, of the ESB as a utility, there is no difference between the unions, none whatsoever and all of the unions are at one on that particular one.

Interestingly, we had ten years at the ESB of no price increases and in the last three to four years there has been approximately 40% of an increase. The reason for keeping prices down for ten years was a political decision and again the reasons for letting the prices increase in this particular way is another political decision, although taken through the regulator. And those particular decisions in relation to price increases were taken to induce competitors into the market. The market that we have here is a very small market and it is an absolute nonsense the kind of thinking which is coming, which instigated the review of the electricity industry – which isn't a review of the electricity industry – it is a review of the ESB

which is intended to atomise it into many small parts. I don't believe that is in the interests of the community, I don't believe it is in the interests of the public, it is not in the interests of people who work in the ESB and it is a process which I believe is discredited. But nonetheless this particular review is being instituted and it is necessary to oppose it. It is supposedly the case that the ESB has a dominant position which has to be addressed. The fact of the matter is that the interconnector which connects the two parts of this island will then be connected over to the UK and the supposedly dominant position of the ESB will turn into a position where they have 8% of that total market. That's going to happen in the next three or four years and so therefore what you have in terms of dominance at this particular point and time is a temporary issue and should be seen as a temporary issue and does not need a situation where a review has been instituted, which many of us believe has already been written and will be taken out of a drawer and presented to the consultants because there is no doubt about it that there is a train of thought in the department which is hostile to public service even though they themselves are public servants and they benefit well out of the benefits which are there.

So I would ask Congress for the support for this particular resolution, and I do take the point which was made by a number of speakers that we need to connect not alone the passing of these resolutions but with a coherent policy to go out and oppose in a meaningful way. I do believe this is possible to do and I do believe it is possible to defend the public utilities which we have here and I believe we should do that.

Thank you Conference.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Have a seconder? Formally seconded.

Can I put Motion 19 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Against. Abstentions. Ok, that's passed thank you.

Can I move to Motion 20 in An Post by PSEU.

Delegates, on these single motions that we are not taking with common debate – if the movers of the next motions and the seconders could move forward to the front here – there is room for them and it speeds up the process, ok. Thank you.

Tom Geraghty, PSEU

Thank you Chair. Tom Geraghty, PSEU moving Motion 20. And unfortunately, I am doing so against a background of a deep sense of betrayal among the staff in An Post and ironically, against a background of where those same staff have created one of the genuine success stories of Irish life. For despite the negative perception of An Post, it is a company that reaches into every household in the Irish Republic, including all along the western seaboard where it isn't and could never be commercial to deliver letters, and yet despite the fact that the Government provides no subsidy to An Post for meeting that social obligation, despite the fact that An Post was left for 12 years without any price increase whatsoever, it managed to come through that period without accumulating any debt and turning modest profits year in year out. And I should also add despite a general impression that there have been reasonable industrial relations within that company over that period and there hasn't been a major dispute in An Post for close on 13 years. However, no company could continue indefinitely against the background that I have described a situation where they are required to meet social obligations with out any subsidisation where they have been started of necessary price increases and where they are ultimately judged (*tape change over*).. where there are difficulties or potential difficulties but instead of dealing with the underlying problems, and instead of dealing with the failures in public policy that have given rise to those circumstances, the solution that has been proffered is one that involves significant cuts in labour costs.

Now obviously the unions in An Post were used to dealing with management who want to cut back on staff. We can deal with that sort of thing on the basis of normal ongoing industrial relations negotiations. However, what is totally unacceptable is firstly the company's decision not to pay the basic terms of *Sustaining Progress* and the fact that unfortunately, quite recently that that decision has been vindicated at least in part by the LRC appointed assessors. Quite inexplicably, because in effect what that is saying is that the staff in An Post should pay for the company meeting its social obligations. Now quite apart from the fact that is quite obviously daft, it is completely unacceptable so far as the unions are concerned. And it has led to a sense of deep betrayal on the part of the people who work in An Post. And they feel betrayed not just by the company management, they feel betrayed by the Government which has allowed this situation to develop, despite the fact that this is the very Government with whom we are in partnership in the national pay agreements and the national deals over the years and including the very *Sustaining Progress* that they are now refusing to pay to one group of their own employees, and they feel betrayed by the regulatory authorities that have allowed the situation to develop where An Post has been starved of the necessary resources, by refusing them the necessary price increases over the years. And they feel completely betrayed by the processes under *Sustaining Progress* and in particular by the Assessors who were appointed by the LRC and who have by and large vindicated the position taken by the management. And that is a situation that we cannot as unions allow to continue. Now the process is not over – we will be going to the Labour Court that is provided for under *Sustaining Progress* and will be making the

arguments made here to the Court, that you have to look at the finances against the context described and it is simply unacceptable and will not be acceptable situation where the staff in An Post are expected to subsidise the company's social obligations. I would ask you to adopt the motion, thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder. Are you seconding the motion, yes?

Terry Delany, Communication Workers' Union

Terry Delany, Communication Workers' Union seconding the motion. I think Tom has set the scene very well about the difficulties that the unions in An Post are about to face into. The decision by An Post, supported fully by the Government, not to pay the full terms of *Sustaining Progress* represents a challenge not just to the unions in An Post but also to the trade union movement in general. It opens the door for the other semi-state companies and public services to claim inability to pay on the basis that the cost of providing a public service must be met by refusal to pay national pay agreements and that is precisely what is happening in An Post. Tom mentioned the progress, or lack of same, that has been made to date in terms of bringing in the Assessors – I don't want to go into too much detail with regard to the Assessors' report, the only conclusion I could come to was that the must have been trained in the Charlie Haughey school of accountancy.

There is no doubt that this has the potential to cause major damage to social partnership which we have built very steadily over the years. Let me just give you a quick example of the impact this is having on our members in the CWU. Postmen and women start off on a pay of €350 a week and after nine years, roughly, raised to the magnificent sum of €440 per week. They haven't had the full terms of *Sustaining Progress*. There is a huge impact on pensioners. Members have retired after 40 years service on paltry pensions and because of the nature of the pension schemes they are involved in they don't have an entitlement to the State pension. They have had no increase whatsoever under the terms of *Sustaining Progress* and some are now seeking welfare assistance from the State. And this is happening at a time when this country is awash with money. Colleagues referred earlier on to the tax scams that are taking place. I will defy anybody to read in a daily newspaper now and not find some cost overrunning in some public service project running into hundreds of millions of euro and no questions are being asked.

Tom has said that we referred to the Labour Court hearing that would take place shortly. Let me say that our union intend to deal through the Labour Court and we respect the Court as an institution and they have been very helpful to date.

But we will not allow a situation to develop where the Government of the country can hid behind the Court and hide behind the Labour Relations Commission and abdicate its responsibilities to pay postal workers. That is not going to be allowed to happen by postal workers. We are engaged in a struggle now, it has manifested itself last December in a march of 10,000 postal workers through the streets of Dublin. And in that regard I want to pay particular tribute to David Begg for the support he has given the postal unions.

I am long enough around to remember 1979 and the postal dispute we had then. At that time we were told that we were dealing with the biggest majority Fianna Fail Government ever known in the history of the State and we hadn't got a leg to stand on. There are shades of 1979 now in front of us and I would remind the Government that they had a big majority then and postal workers won out and we have no difficulty whatsoever in taking on this Government again to ensure full delivery of *Sustaining Progress* for our members.

Thanks comrades.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thanks Terry. Speaking on this motion?

Sean O'Riordain, AHCPs

Sean O'Riordain, Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants speaking in support of the motion and agreeing with everything my two colleagues have said in terms of the difficult in which the An Post employees face. However, in recent times let me just say that the level of industrial relations dynamic in An Post has been very difficult. The central issue of trust just isn't there at all. Even our own association certainly isn't noted for any militancy found itself twice, uniquely, in the public service balloting for industrial action last year. And that wasn't because we wanted increases in excess of whatever was going above the normal, anything like that. It was just simply to get the company to utilise the basic negotiating machinery of the State and to honour agreements.

Now there are central issues for Government in terms of universal service obligation and the cost of that and how that is borne, which is reasonable to expect the Government to address. Like my colleague representatives who have spoken already, we equally support the application to the Labour Court and we will then deal with the outcome.

Thank you.

Eoin Ronayne, CPSU

Eoin Ronayne, Civil & Public Services Union supporting all that has been said before. We too, the second largest union in An Post behind the CWU, will of course go through the procedures that are laid out for us in *Sustaining Progress*, but there are a couple of simple questions that this debate to try and focus on what it is really all about. It is not about negotiations for change process and engaging in change process. The unions, and mine in particular, have done that and dealt with that and delivered the profits to the company that they seek. None of the unions in An Post are frightened or unwilling to engage in the change negotiations programme. We will stand on our own strengths and deal with it as is necessary. But there is a few core issues at stake here and there is a certain administration south of the border in Dublin in Merrion Street, hiding behind the notion that it is not in any way connected to this. Who owns An Post? The State owns An Post. Who represents the citizens of the State? The Government. Who is a key party and critical pillar in the four pillar national agreements structure? The Government. Who is hiding at the moment? The Government. The Government is hiding behind the LRC, behind the Labour Court – it is somebody's else's problem.

What is needed now is for ICTU to stand up with us in the trade union movement, as they have been doing in the negotiations to date, to say very clearly that the Government is a key player in this. It bankrolls effectively An Post, it is the owner and it is up to the Government to come out from behind the Labour Court and the LRC and the process of industrial relations and stand up and deliver on a national agreement and it is a critical one for other semi-state workers. The inability to pay clause is being used by a Government which the last time I looked at the Exchequer finances was anywhere but broke, right. The inability to pay clause does not apply to a Government which is unique in Europe as one of the fastest growing economies and most successful. What is needed from them is to deliver the basic cost of living rises to their semi-state workers in An Post as they have done in other semi-state companies and if it is not delivered in An Post it is a very serious warning to this trade union movement going forward into another national pay agreement. If the Government is not prepared to deliver as the employer we must have a serious problem with continued social partnership and that message must go clearly from the trade union movement to the key employer group that we deal with – the Government. Quite simply, we expect of them to deliver as a key party to the national agreement. If they don't the issue of the next national deal becomes a critical problem for the trade union movement and must in the eyes of every semi-state worker cast grave doubts about the ability of the Government to deliver as an employer. Stand behind the An Post worker, more particularly, stand behind the idea of a public sector economy that should be strong and deliver and a Government as an employer that stands by its honour and its word and delivers on its agreements.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

Terry Kelleher, CPSU, also a postal worker. I am owed 8.5%, I am down €40 per week, €50 per week since September, 2003 and the staff are ready to walk out the door and stay out there. It is not just about the money – there is a line drawn in the sand. Pensioners have not got their pay rise either. This is different than anything we have had before. They stopping our money but it is not just a question of that they can't afford, they can afford to pay. An Post staff blames Fianna Fail and are prepared to use their vote in the next election and we have said that quite clear. Our attitude is that An Post provides us with a service that needs to be funded by a subsidy on an annual basis like all other major semi-state companies. We don't get it. In 1990 our former CEO, Mr John Hynes put forward a proposal of introducing roadside letterboxes down the country. He said it would save us 15 million a year. The Government said no, you have to go in, knock on the door, social contact, blah, blah, blah. Ok, we will do that but where is our 15 million for doing it? I tell you where the 15, it out of my pocket. They are dipping into my pocket and my colleagues' pockets to pay this. And it is crystal clear to the workers on the ground and they are prepared to take strike action to defend it because it is not just about the 8%. From now on every single pay rise we will have to haggle over. We won't accept the burden of keeping An Post afloat. We won't do it. It is not our job. There is people in the Dail getting paid very well to do that job. It is not our job. Our job is hard enough thanks to Mr Curtin.

The Assessors' report congratulates this brilliant management team in An Post who turned the situation around. By the way I think they are getting help from GAMA accounts. In 2003 they made a profit of a couple of million. In 2004 we made a loss of 47 million and now we make a profit of 22 million. Its mindboggling. Where this money is going and coming from. Then the Assessors come in, pat them on the back, they are doing a great job. Calling Mr Curtin and his individuals good business people is like calling a butcher a surgeon.

I will walk into any job, any management job, stop recruitment, stop pay rises, close down your parcel business – anyone could go in and do that. It is the easy way.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleague, your time is up.

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

Thanks very much for pointing that out.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

By the way I am not speaking on behalf of An Post.

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

Maybe I should have said I was Jack O'Connor from SIPTU because they don't seem to work when

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Come on, colleague.

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

Brothers and sisters I ask you to take

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Come on, off, come on, you are going to get the motion, don't be tearing the ass out of it now, come on.

Terry Kelleher, CPSU

Thank you Chair, thank you brothers and sister.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can I put Motion 20 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions? Motion 20 is passed.

Colleagues, I am going to take motion 21 which it has an amendment to it from IMPACT and after that I am going to take John Monks, General Secretary of the ETUC to make a fraternal address.

NIPSA to move motion 21.

John Corey, NIPSA

John Corey, NIPSA to move motion 21. Colleagues, we believe Congress faces two Governments, North and South, committed to advocating for and assisting the private sector to secure a far greater share in the delivery of our public services. Of course this is not peculiar to Southern Ireland, Northern Ireland or the UK. The so called public private partnerships, PPPs, are worldwide and if you examine the language of PPPs it is also largely the same worldwide. First, it is always claimed that PPPs are necessary to enable Government to deliver urgent infrastructure projects and the list of that grows: roads, schools, hospitals, new computing systems and so on.

Second, it is always claimed that PPPs provide value for money for the taxpayer and colleagues that defies logic when you consider the additional costs of PPP over normal public procurement. The higher cost of private sector borrowing, the massive consultants' fees involved – just have a look at the websites of Deloitte or PWC, of KPMG to see how important PPPs are to very existence. And of course the maximum profit taking for the life of a PPP project but yet we are to believe PPPs are a cost effective option for the delivery of our public services.

And third, somehow or other PPPs will magically guarantee higher quality public services. This latter is usually attributed to the apparent fact that lurking in the private sector there are these special human beings – totally different from the rest of us – who are the only people in the world with the skills and knowledge to improve the delivery of public services. In my view, colleagues, special human beings are not to be found in the elites of multi-national corporations, venture capitalists or private sector consultants. Colleagues, the special human beings are those who spend their working days and nights, often for minimum wage levels, in our social welfare and benefits offices, in our schools, in our hospitals, in our children's homes, in our old persons & nursing homes and some of the latter often the worst examples of the exploitation of workers by Public Private Partnerships. I do not believe that there are any special skills in the private sector that can't be provided by the public sector and that message isn't heard enough, especially from the leaders or the seniors of public servants, many of whom appear to me very happy to offload their responsibility for the delivery of public services to a minefield of private sector contracts. PPPs are no more than privatisation and we are calling on this Conference today to assert the principal loud and clear that public services should be delivered by accountable public servants using publically owned assets.

The current Congress policy acknowledges their differences in the policy frameworks North and South, and as a Northern trade union we respect Congress' assessment of PPPs in the context of social partnership agreements in the Irish Republic. But I want to make two points from a Northern perspective.

First, I have already said PPPs are a worldwide phenomena. Notwithstanding all the merits and protections of social partnership agreements, I think we can be certain that private sector players and PPP have the same objective North and South and worldwide – to get services out of the public sector and into the private sector for maximum profit. For them it really is a public private partnership – the public sector pays and the private sector profits. And we have one of the best examples of that here in Northern Ireland at the moment where they are proposing to hand over the personnel and payroll work for all Northern Ireland civil servants' departments to the private sector and what is worse, colleagues, tax payers money is actually being used to assist the private sector company to set up on business to do that.

And that example is relevant to the second point. We live in a very small island. What happens on one impacts on the other, colleagues, and I don't believe we can afford to ignore the position in one side or the other. For those reasons NIPSA would respectfully ask our colleagues in IMPACT not to press the amendment of NIPSA motion. We do not dispute the circumstances in the South which are different, but I can tell you that in the North, for example, Government has used "not for profit" organisations to undermine public services.

The second paragraph of NIPSA's motion which IMPACT wishes to amend restates word for word the policy adopted by this Congress in 2003 and we believe it would be wrong for this Congress to amend or dilute that policy today.

Colleagues, we believe finally that the end message that must come from the Conference in Belfast is that this Conference supports unequivocally public services being delivered by public servants and that this Conference will challenge every Public Private Partnership.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder?

Brian Booth, NIPSA

Colleagues, President, Brian Booth, NIPSA to second Motion 21 and ask that you reject the amendment. Comrades, both the Irish and British direct rule ministers are increasingly using private sector companies to not only replace our much needed infrastructure but they are also using private sector companies to deliver services.

Comrades, I work in the education sector delivering and maintaining a service to our children and to the public. The service I work in has really had to jump through the hoops of Maggie Thatcher's compulsive competitive tendering process. We won our tenders at that time and as with most our one tender in education and counsel services throughout the North, the public sector provided the best in value for money terms. So not only after having to jump through that hoop we now have the 21st Century Maggie in the guise of Tony Blair and his new Labour now imposing upon us Public Private Partnerships and the private finance initiative.

Comrades, I was to gel at one particular PPP that is currently underway in two schools in the area that I work. This project was started over two years ago by the previous Minister for Education, Barry Gardiner, God rest him. At the same time 'design and build' contracts commenced in schools in the area I worked under traditional design and build processes. At the PPP schools not one brick has been laid to date. At the traditionally procured schools they have been functioning with children since last August. How can this make financial fiscal sense?

These two PPP secondary level schools are costing around Stg £20 million to build under traditional methods, but treasury policy is forced upon us that they must be built under the PPP – Public Private Partnership arrangements. Mortgages for 25 years at a cost of £60 million to the public purse – that includes a service of grounds maintenance, cleaning and caretaking. Not only do these assets not belong to the public anymore, but they belong to the massive multi-nationals like Jarvis, Hockteeth, Kagima and Fujitsu. Comrades, this Congress should be telling both Governments that this form of partnership will not be subscribed to in any shape or form. No way should Congress just say it opposes this partnership, it should actually oppose it vigorously from the highest and lowest levels.

We heard Peter Hain here yesterday saying that water charges would have to be imposed in order to pay for our hospitals and schools. I say to Mr Hain that he is either a liar or a poor mathematician because why would we need water charges when the new Labour intention is to sell off our schools and hospitals to the private sector multi-national sharks. There are no profits in the public sector and the sale of public assets in the State and services will reap in profits for the private sector, in this case public is undoubtedly good, private is bad. Say no to Public Private Partnerships and also say no to water charges, support the motion and reject the amendment.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague.

Moving the amendment, Shay?

Shay Cody, IMPACT

Shay Cody from IMPACT proposing the amendment. I note the comment made by my colleague and friend, John Corey, asking that IMPACT wouldn't press it he acknowledged a different situation in the Republic but unfortunately the motion and the contributions did not in any shape or form refer to the situation in the Republic and we must press the amendment.

The amendment has two components. The first deals with the statement in the motion which requires that public services can only be delivered by public servants using public assets. The second one deals with the necessity to recognise existing agreements with the trade unions in the South regarding PPPs.

Taking the first part of the amendment, IMPACT is opposed to public services being delivered by commercial entities. The recent Prime Time programme on nursing homes highlights the dangers of the profit motive in the care area. However, IMPACT and we believe Congress, is not opposed to public services being delivered by "not for profit" organisations applying appropriate pay and conditions. Our union and others in Congress organise thousand of workers in the community, voluntary and religious sectors who deliver essential public services. These include some of the most significant hospitals in the Republic, services to the intellectually and physically disadvantaged sectors are mainly delivered by "not for profit" agencies like St Michael's House, the Central Remedial Clinic, Enable Ireland and a significant element of community employment is actually delivered by locally based community groups and the Congress local centres certainly deliver key services to the Republic. There is no realistic basis for us to seek to have these services exclusively delivered by the mainstream public service.

The second element of the amendment seeks to recognise that there are agreements in the Republic which require prior information and consultation where PPPs are contemplated and where a service is to be delivered through a PPP, existing pay and conditions will be recognised. These include agreements in *Sustaining Progress*. These have been approved under various national

ballots conducted under national agreements in the Republic and the amendment simply seeks to recognise the different positions in the two jurisdictions. IMPACT sees the amendment as strengthening the central tenet of the motion which is opposition to the commercial private sector delivering public services or the creation of a two tier or exploited workforce.

Support the amendment and support the amended motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Shay. Is there a seconder for the amendment? Formally seconded? OK. No more speakers.

Colleagues, I am putting the amendment to the floor.

Those in favour please show. Those against. It is carried.

I am now putting the motion, as amended, to the floor.

Those in favour please show. Those against.

Thank you, the amended motion is carried.

I now move to call on John Monks, the General Secretary of the ETUC to make a fraternal address to the Conference, John.

John Monks, General Secretary ETUC - Fraternal Address

President, delegates, fellow guests, Brendan, it is a real pleasure to come to this Conference in your home city – a city as we all know has seen so much conflict, so much suffering yet also, always exhibits spirit, vitality, and whose people invariably display optimism about its future.

After recent events – the French and Dutch referendums and I am thinking of last week's summit, working in the European Union feels today a bit like living Belfast from time to time. There is this cocktail of emotions, a mixture of hope tinged with worry and concern and that is really what I want to address today in these remarks to you and I will be reminding delegates of what the EU means to the working people of Ireland, to the UK and elsewhere. That's what I want to address today. My speech will remind delegates of what the EU means to the working people of Ireland, the UK and elsewhere, and making the case for a new fight to establish the EU anew in the affections and loyalties of the peoples in Europe and beyond Europe.

Now this Conference, as I well know from my time at the TUC, has a long and honourable record in promoting peace in the island of Ireland, and not just in Ireland but well beyond it across the world. And you know, the European Union has been the world's biggest and most successful peace process – healing the wounds of two world wars, and the scars of the underlying conflicts which, in some cases, go back centuries – is the conflicts which made Europe the world's bloodiest continent in the 20th Century. Tribes of Europe have always been very ready to fight each other.

What has happened since? Well conflict was replaced largely by prosperity and of course Ireland, has been a particularly spectacular example of success and within the context of this co-operation project that is called Europe, resources are shovelled from the rich to the poor. As delegates said earlier in one of the debates, this is a world in which the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and the gap is widening. Well there is one exception to that and that is the EU where the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries has been narrowing as poorer countries have caught up with quicker growth rates than the more mature economies. Not just Ireland but Spain is a particularly spectacular example around which many people are familiar with. The single market gives scale, it gives dynamism, there was talk about small markets in Ireland earlier too, but this is a big market and the ancient rivalries which afflict many parts of Europe have, at least in the West, been put, if not entirely to rest, then firmly on one side.

And now you can see the same healing process working in the 10 new member states, the states that joined last year. There are complex ethnic mixtures all over Central and Eastern Europe – with different minorities scattered around – Hungarians in the Czech Republic, Slovaks in Hungary and so on and so on. The

EU made it a strict condition of membership that there is full recognition of minority rights, no discrimination, no persecution and this has helped anchor these countries as democracies.

And indeed that brings me to my next point because apart from spreading peace, the EU spreads democracy. It was only 30 years ago that we had fascist dictatorships in Spain, Portugal and Greece, 15 years ago since Eastern Europe was under heel of the Warsaw Pact. The EU has quietly been helping the pro-democracy movements and democratic governments dig in and thrive.

And surely it is the EU historic mission to do the same in the Balkans where memories of bloody civil war are very recent indeed. Remember the 1990's and Srebrenica. So that is what Europe does and that is what Europe has done and we should never forget it. Those of us who may be take these things for granted in our part of the European Union. But the European Union does other things too. Because it is the place in the world where our values, trade union values are the strongest. Where there is an attachment to welfare states, where public services take up a big part as we have just been hearing, of countries' economies. Where trade unions and collective bargaining are central to what goes on in a society. Not in the margins, not as persecuted animals that you probably heard from Jimmy Hoffa yesterday is almost now the position in large parts of the United States and indeed in other parts of the world. The European Union has got our values, it is the area of the world which trade unions are strongest, where public services are the best and where welfare states are the best as well. Yet, we have also got to recognise, and I certainly have to do so that those 'no' votes in the French and Dutch referendums, and the British decision not to proceed with a referendum for the time being at least, have now plunged the European peace movement and its European trade union movement, the European thing of bringing people together for prosperity movement into crisis – a crisis which could be long, could be prolonged and paralysing without good co-operative leadership and collective action.

Actually we saw the opposite of that collective leadership in Brussels at the end of last week. After a major challenge to Europe's future in those two referendums, a challenge which needs some good statesmanship to overcome it, we had a row, unseemly row in my opinion, about the EU budget. When some statesmanship was needed, we saw nationalistic gallery-playing to divert attention away from the problem about the EU Constitution. The British blame the French and vice versa. Others are widening the blame, and you know you can see those ancient rivalries become faintly visible when you look at Europe now.

And so to what was a constitutional crisis, and in many countries too, a crisis in the economy, we have to add a self-inflicted budgetary crisis too.

And while it pains me to say so, the UK Labour Government is at the heart of this crisis.

It was only three weeks ago that the UK linked the issue of its rebate to the reform the Common Agricultural Policy; and only last year that the UK was among those countries who blocked a proposal to limit the open-ended compensation paid to the largest farmers – and that is the biggest scandal of the CAP the fact that the Queen and all the large land owners across Europe are taking the lion's share of the CAP – it is not the small hill farmers and people like that who are the real beneficiaries of the CAP.

So for me it was more opportunism than principle which motivated the UK Government at the summit – and in consequence, they inflicted further damage on the European project. New Labour sermons, which we are used to in the British labour movement, about the need for change and reform and so on will neither get nor deserve a hearing while the UK plays to its own Eurosceptic, rather nationalistic gallery.

At the moment, we have a Government which claims to be avowedly pro-European but it is blocking the budget, by the way it is blocking the budget of the international labour organisation – a very important body for the trade union movement to the world, it is blocking key social issues such as ending the Europe issues like ending the opt-out from the working time directive and leading moves to put the Constitution in cold storage. I can only say it's a good job that we do not have a Eurosceptic Government in Britain!

But it is not just the UK. The ETUC Executive Committee met last week and recognised, we had to recognise, that although 10 countries have said yes to the constitution, two founder member states of the EU, have delivered a powerful blow, not just against the EU Constitutional Treaty but against the way the current European project is being managed.

They voted 'no' for many reasons, European and national, but fear of lower social standards and neo-liberal policies, of insecurity and precarious work, and of high unemployment played key parts. Some of that is reflected in the fears that have been expressed in the debates I have been listening to this morning.

Now the people of our continent deserve urgent action from Europe's leaders. And not to act would encourage the many opponents of the European project who are seeking to weaken it. We supported the European Constitutional and I have picked out bits – my predecessor negotiated them about social values, social objectives, social dialogue and in particular the charter of fundamental rights which is in the Constitution. A very complex document but is more in our direction than against. Compromise for sure but when didn't trade union members compromise and we in balance saw the Constitution, brokered by the way by Bertie Ahern, with his skill in his final days, we regarded as a pretty good deal for Europe. Not perfect but again we don't expect perfection we expect progress. So I am saying on behalf of the ETUC that Member States cannot just

put it in the waste paper basket, they have got to find ways of proceeding with the development of Europe and not play to own Eurosceptic nationalist gallery. But we have to recognise too that there is no chance, I believe, of gaining popular support for this thing called 'Europe' with a more successful economy, without economies with a strong social dimension, public services, welfare states and a proper place for the trade unions, and that we give some sense of security by workers who are facing the changes that globalisation are bringing. And restoring confidence in Europe by being confident about social Europe, about being confident about our future is something perhaps that is missing at the moment and so we are calling for the EU and the social partners to be involved in that. I am seeing Tony Blair on behalf of the ETUC next week to draw up a new economic, employment and social pact to reflect a new measure of will to face the future together and make Europe ready and prepared to handle the globalisation process, to remove fear and support a greater measure of confidence there.

We are looking too for a quick deal to resolve the unseemly row about the budget. A fair deal for all the member states, but not just based on what you pay you get out but on the sense that it is in everybody's interest to help those poorer countries catch up and narrow the gaps because that is what has really brought prosperity and peace to Europe. You can't run the continent with a peaceful Western half and an impoverished Eastern half without huge population flows resulting and without all sorts of tensions in those Eastern halves.

And regaining the trust of the European citizens across all these different countries, I believe putting the idea of the social dimension centre stage. Many of you will have been involved in the campaigns, both in the North and the South, that have been taking place about the Services Directive – the so-called Bolkenstein Directive – which does threaten a race to the bottom on labour standards. We know about that – the fact is that if a company shifted say from Belfast, went to Slovakia, registered there and then could apply Slovakian conditions throughout the rest of the European Union, how devastating that could be to collective agreements and labour standards. Well we have been doing well on that. We had a demonstration in March – 75,000 European workers voiced their support for Social Europe against Bolkenstein and we a few days later with the support of President Chirac and some others, we have got the whole thing being fundamentally recast and revised. Already with commitments that collective agreements in labour standards will not be affected, that public services won't be affected and brought under this regime and thirdly that I think we are about to get established that any cases will be dealt with in the country of destination. So that if there is a complaint about a company it won't have to be dealt with in Slovakia but it would be dealt with in Ireland or Britain or wherever it happens to be that the company is offending the rules of the single market and its strong social dimension. So we want to use Social Europe in that way and I think that shows, by the way, that Social Europe is not dead. It is not being pushed by the entrepreneurs completely to one side. There are battles that

when we act together we can win and that is one I believe, certainly we have won the battle, we have not won the war yet, but the tide is flowing in our favour.

So I can't report similar progress on the Working Time Directive but I do believe that Social Europe is alive and well and maybe one good thing out of the French situation and the both was that the sense of Social Europe is being put back, at least, very much in the centre of the member states agenda now and that is certainly a point to remind Tony Blair about next week.

So, today, Brendan, at a time of European crisis, lets together issue a call for European renewal, a call for the reconnection of Europe's citizens to the project of building a stronger Europe committed to peace, to justice and to solidarity for our continent.

Let's be brave enough too to initiate with the nationalists a frank debate about the problems Europe has got. How big it should go; where should our Eastern border stop; should it be as the old British land of hope and glory song went "wider still and wider" or should it be a bit more limited; how it should spend its money on research and development, agriculture and so on; how much should that budget be; what should be the functions that should stay national and those that go European; how do we strengthen Social Europe yet but make it dynamic and help in the process of change so that Europe's economy can keep up with the Americans and the Chinese and the other. And let's build a new confident political manifesto for Europe. Popular and realistic but also ambitious – not to be America's poodle but to stand as a powerful friend to democracy, to peace and solidarity throughout the world.

European countries, however venerable, however significant they are, cannot do these things on their own, they are too small. Old neighbours, who historically don't get on well together, who squabbled and fought have achieved little when they have done that but working together, standing together, acting together they can do much.

Unity is strength in the trade union world we know that. Unity is strength in Europe too.

To you all I want to express the thanks of the ETUC for the loyal enthusiastic support we get from the Congress and to you all in Ireland, whichever part you come from, which ever tradition you come from, very, very best wishes for the future. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, John. Can I on behalf of the ICTU thank you for your address and as always for being a good friend of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, thank you.

Can I move on to Motion 22 on behalf of the INO – Health Services. Can I ask the speakers and seconders of motion 22 and 23 to please come to the front. We are taking those two motions and common debate. Go ahead.

Joe Hoolan, INO

Joe Hoolan, Irish Nurses Organisation proposing motion 22. In November 2001, our Government announced two strategy documents which promised over a seven year period to address the inadequate capacity and shortcomings within our health services. The health strategy promised 3,000 additional acute beds and 5,000 non-acute beds. Of the 3,000 acute beds about 10% have been delivered. Of the non-acute beds only a fraction have been delivered. And there are many reasons why Government has not delivered on this promise but the simple fact is that to deliver on this badly needed extra bed capacity, an additional 13,000 nurses and midwives would have to be trained and recruited and quite simply Ireland cannot retain nurses and midwives. They have left Ireland for better pay, better training opportunities, better working conditions and to health services that are properly and safely staffed.

The Primary Care Strategy announced all those years ago promised 60 primary care units from Donegal to Cork and from Galway to Dublin and this too has been a dismal failure, with the primary care steering committee now in complete freefall as it cannot get any direction from Government on what its future intentions are.

We need commitment, we need funding but more importantly we need timeframes for these strategies and ICTU should be demanding these. 300 people a week are being cared for on trolleys, on chairs and on the floors of our A&E departments in the South and these people deserve no less. ICTU should be demanding from the health service timeframes for extra bed capacity and they should be loud about it. The Tánaiste believes that the extra bed capacity issue can and should be provided by the private sector. Well let me give you a warning, the current legislation to safeguard standards in private sectors is completely inadequate. Inspections are at the best infrequent and the requirement for a registered nurse presence is minimal and therefore meaningless.

Our message from Conference should be simple. Our health is not for sale. Need rather than the ability to pay determines access to health care. A private health care system should not be on the back of our public health service.

The debacle of the illegal charging of our elderly citizens is now well known. However, the repayment of the money legitimately owed to our elderly in nursing homes must not interfere with or negatively impact on the level of health services

available over the coming years. The repayment must not come out of current health expenditure and we cannot get any commitment from Government that it won't. Congress must insist that this mistake by the State is not compounded by the same....(tape change) continues unabated. The INO has been at the forefront in shaming our Government and employers into continuous action to address the disgraceful conditions that exist in these units. The only response the employers can think of was to retaliate, to threaten nurses and midwives due to their embarrassment over our 'Enough is Enough' campaign, and their failure in rolling out a 10 point plan and for not managing the situation better on a daily basis. Well nurses and midwives will not be threatened.

May I just say at this point too how disappointed we were at so called trade union solidarity when another trade union almost endorsed the employers' attitude towards us.

The Tánaiste's 10 point plan will not address the crises in all of our A&E departments. We need continuous investment in our front line services, not just in Dublin but throughout the country and this funding should be additional and immediate. Our front line staff deserve no less and the people attending A&E departments deserve no less.

It is not acceptable that we have an economy which the Government presents at every opportunity has been a shining example of successful economic policy when at the same time we have a health service which is unable to meet the demands placed upon it and which is, in effect, totally inadequate. *Sustaining Progress* continues to be used by employers to ignore the manpower crises and therefore lower the quality of care to patients and clients.

Congress, I ask you are we *Sustaining Progress* within our health service – I think we are not. Please accept this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, colleague. A seconder?

Jo Tully, INO

The A&E crisis is only the tip of the iceberg. Really it is the public face of the daily horror which has become our health service. I am not going to go into that daily horror, people know it, it comes out in the media etc. Suffice to say that the stories of the 30,000 who languish on waiting lists, waiting for necessary treatment, investigative treatment, investigative procedures and all of the rest – that is a story yet to be told. And that is not to mention the thousands of people who are waiting to be listed on those waiting lists because you can't be on the waiting list until you get a consultant's appointment, then you become an official

'waiter'. So the horror is amazing, and this is happening in a country which is the fourth richest in the planet. Words fail us that we are in this situation 12 years into a Celtic Tiger economy.

We know what the problem is in the health service. We know that 20 years of effective criminal plunder has gone on since the mid 1980 where successive Governments have effectively closed 20%, one fifth of the acute national beds. That is the core of the crisis. They were in denial right through the 1990's where the ramifications of that started to explode in A&E departments etc. Finally, in 2001 they did acknowledge that there was a need for something around about 5,000 and promised something like 3,000 in the Health Strategy. Since then, and it is very significant, that Mary Harney has announced earlier this year that it is the private sector she encouraging to provide those additional beds. This is very, very significant. That will be underpinned by tax incentives delivered by Charlie McCreevy into big business to provide health services for profit. This is part and parcel of what we have discussed earlier on over the last couple of hours which is the privatisation of our public services, particularly our health service. It is crucially important that we do not allow this carry on in the absence of a debate and that is what has happened. The frustration, the desperation of both workers within the health service and patients outside of it needing it are left thinking because there is no debate really not coming from either the trade union movement or the labour movement, that this should not be a privatised service. There is another solution and we should be putting serious pressure as a trade union movement to ensure that the privatisation agenda will not happen. And I want to repeat a call made by my President earlier on when she called for national demonstration by the trade union movement for September or for October saying we will not accept a privatisation of our health service. I think we should pledge ourselves to that today, I think it is time – we owe it to ourselves and our patients.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleague, thank you. Can I have the mover for Motion 23 please.

Kevin Callinan, IMPACT

Kevin Callinan, IMPACT moving motion 23 on health service and privatisation.

I start by stating the obvious because it is the point often missed in the media and the public debate – trade unions and health workers are not opposed to change in our health services. Indeed we have been one of the loudest and most consistent voices calling for change in recent years. We want to see changes that will bring quality, efficiency, and above all equity into the health service. Changes that mean medical need determines your experience of the

health service not how much money you have or how much insurance you can afford to buy.

Motion 23 addressed the biggest danger facing our troubled health service because behind Government's talk of reform, and there has been a lot of talk, lurks a nasty agenda of backdoor privatisation. When problems emerge, the Government doesn't ask what is best for patients and services users, instead it asks how the for profit private sector can be involved.

Conference, this is pure ideology. There is no evidence that the private sector will deliver more quality, still less more equity. Indeed the evidence is that too much public money is already being siphoned off into private profit while elderly people wait on trolleys and children queue to see a social worker, a psychologist or a speech therapist. While public patients queue for treatment their taxes subsidise private beds and private practice in our public hospitals. And public employees provide services to consultants doing private work. This is a significant factor in our two-tier health service because it diverts resources from the real problems of poor investment and chronic skill shortages. There has always been a significant private health sector but it is unacceptable that taxpayers' money is subsidising profit driven and it is unacceptable that the rush to privatisation is driving the Government's approach to any and every problem in our health service. We have seen what privatisation has done to health services here in the North and throughout Britain. Lots of people have made a lot of money but in the recent Westminster election the health debate was eerily familiar. Waiting lists, poor accountability, hospital cleanliness and so forth. Privatisation certainly hasn't worked here and I despair at our Government which seems determined to make the same mistake.

Congress has not taken an ideological position on Public Private Partnerships. And this motion seeks to reaffirm our successful practical approach to PPPs. Yes, if they can bring real improvement in capital investment, yes if staff and unions are consulted about each proposal and give their agreement, but a resounding no to PPPs as a smokescreen for privatisation of core health service delivery. This motion also calls for a value for money audit of all the millions of taxpayers' euro spend on private provision. Taxpayers and citizens deserve to know what ongoing costs over 10, 20, 30 years will they have to fork out for PPP projects. How many extra medical cards could be provided out of the money taxpayers spend on admin and other support for private work in our public hospitals. Is it sensible in the long term to allocate huge resources on the National Treatment Purchase Fund instead of investing in Irish hospitals and primary care? Are we getting value for money for the substantial sums that end up in the hands of management consultants? Or how many health professionals could be trained and employed for the vast sums now being spent on agency nurses and other private practitioners?

We all know that there are many, many problems in our health services and that that there are no simple solutions, but lining the pockets of private sector operators is bad news for patients, for service users and for the taxpayer. It is time to put the spotlight on this scandal, it is time to stop the waste, it is time to put patients not profits at the heart of our health service. Support Motion 23.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder. Formally. OK, can we have the speakers to the two motions.

Dave Hughes, INO

Dave Hughes, Irish Nurses Organisation speaking in favour of both motions. Quality Work = Quality Life is the slogan of this Conference and I am looking at it for the last day and half in front of the podium here. But would that if it were true for the many who rely on our health service and for those who work in it. Yesterday there were 220 patients lying in trolleys in our accident and emergency departments in the South of Ireland. Lying on trolleys isn't every patient who attends in A&E – there are about 3,000 people every day attend A&E departments. The 220 people are people who are admitted to hospital but there is no bed for them so they remain on a trolley until a bed becomes available for them and they are in what is called a 'virtual ward'. A virtual ward is usually a corridor or an overcrowded A&E department and that is what we count when we count people lying on trolleys.

I am just going to quote from Jeannette Byrne who is one of the Patients Together' founders, about her experience briefly: "The noise level is unbelievable, fights breaking out, phones ringing, unfortunates with drug or alcohol addictions roaring through the night – its mad. There is one toilet between everyone. No soap and the winter vomiting bug is rampant. My mother's back was killing her from lying in the one position flat and I asked for an extra pillow only to be told there was none. There was blood splattered on my mother's trolley and around the floor, not hers I might add. At one stage the nurse could not find a container so that my mother could be sick so she had no choice but to vomit on the floor. It was still there the next night."

Her experience is not unique – that was the Mater hospital in Dublin, one of our largest hospitals. In the next trolley beside her was a Mrs Mulraney, an 84 year old who was in a similar situation. The family of those two patients took to the streets and took action and started Patients Together. We say to you, this is not an issue for sick people and their relatives, this is a trade union issue, this is a human rights issue and we all should be protesting about it. It is totally unacceptable. The INO say it is time to call a stop. Enough is Enough – support the campaign.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker, Kevin.

Kevin Lawrenson, NIPSA

President, brothers and sisters, Kevin Lawrenson speaking on behalf of NIPSA to oppose Motion 23. And we are opposing Motion 23 with regards to bullet point number 1, where it states that “no Public Private Partnership be introduced into the health service unless there has been consultation and agreement with the appropriate unions and strict adherence to principles and grievances under *Sustaining Progress* or other national agreements”, and bullet point 4, which says that “public money should generally be invested directly in public health provision.”

Well, Conference, implicit in this motion is that we don't really have a problem with Public Private Partnerships. Instead of adopting this position, Conference, I believe Congress should have a clear policy of total opposition to the introduction of any form of Public Private Partnership in the health service, or for that matter, in any other public service.

Speaker after speaker, both yesterday and today, Conference, condemned the use of private enterprise in the public sector. One speaker yesterday I believe summed it up well when he stated “privatisation is bad for workers and it is bad patients, but privatisation is only good for creaming off profits.”

Page 68, Conference, in the report of the Executive Council reveals a reality. The Department of Health received an allocation of £350 million to develop health PPPs, to develop Public Private Partnerships. In our opinion that's an absolute disgrace when you think of what that money could be used for if it was directed straight in to the health service. This type of allocation of course is great for politicians who can stand up in public and say, I have opened this new hospital or new health centre somewhere when in reality they haven't actually put the money forward in the first place. But the reality is that this is not so good for staff – may be good for politicians but terrible for staff but ever worse for patients who are receiving this secondary service.

I can give you one example very close to her in the Royal Victoria Hospital up the road, where a Public Private Partnership took over the car park. And very, very quickly what happened was they made lots of money by charging extortionate

prices with long, long contracts where it affects the patients, relatives of those people attending that hospital.

But Conference in reality it is fine to stand up here and give examples about the disastrous affects of Public Private Partnerships. The real question is what we do about it. I believe I understand it is different in the Republic with regard to Public Private Partnerships, well I believe it is time we stopped the rot of privatisation through Public Private Partnerships and start an immediate campaign to oppose them from now. Please oppose this motion on those grounds. Thanks very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Dick Roche, TEEU

Dick Roche, TEEU delegate. I just wanted to point out a couple of things that came out of this debate. I think, I don't know that the language in Motion 23, but I think we should support both motions. I think it is better to support them rather than leave them go. I think the important thing that is after coming out of the debate this morning is that there is a clear need for a campaign from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on this issue. And I have to say, I must say, if you look at the facts behind this the campaign is already there. If you just look around the country on the issue of health and the kind of campaigning that is being done. We have seen 20,000 people on the streets in Nenagh, we saw 15,000 people in Ennis, we saw 5,000 people in Monaghan, we saw 20,000 people in Waterford take to the streets so the campaign is there and it is crying out for the leadership of this Congress. And I think today is the day to clearly state that we are going to give that leadership.

I think it is also very important, it is very important for us to quote some of the language that is being used by this Government. I hear Mary Harney constantly say that we can't keep throwing money at the health service, we have been investing in the health service for the last number of years and we can't keep throwing money at it and sure you can't expect the taxpayers to pay for the whole of the health service. Well if the taxpayers don't pay for it, who pays for it? That is code language for privatisation and everyone needs to be clear about that. And the fact behind funding with the health service is that they ripped the bottom out of the health service for the last twenty years, they have brought it up only now this year to the EU average on funding on health. So when she talks about throwing money at the health service, don't get caught by that one.

Thanks very much delegates.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Now, I call on Peter McLoone, Vice President to speak on these Motions 21 and 22 and on Section 3, Chapter 7.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Delegates, Peter McLoone, IMPACT and on behalf of the Executive Council. The report of the Executive Council to this Conference contains details of a review which we recently commissioned of developments in the health services. That is at section 3, chapter 7 on page 123 of the report. This comprehensive review will be completed by October and will shape and inform Congress policy at a time when we expect to be in negotiations about a possible successor to *Sustaining Progress*.

Last week we received the welcomed news that the Health Service Executive has finally and belatedly achieved the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer. The appointment of Professor Brendan Drumm is welcome news and we look forward to engaging with him and his management team in the extremely urgent, necessary and onerous task of carrying through with real reform of the system for delivery of health services. His appointment follows the most traumatic period I have experienced in our health services. Under the guise of a changed management programme we witnessed the dismantling of the old structure in a way that left staff moral at rock bottom in the sector and left us without direction, without new structures until far too late in the process and without any answers to the many questions raised about the nature and extent of the reform programme that had been undertaken.

In fact many people working close to and within the health system experienced more change management than change management and were left with a sad, sorry legacy for what could and should have been a positive transition, particularly when so many supported the reform agenda at the outset.

The Executive Council supports Motions 23 and 24. They are principled, committed motions that express support those who are suffering unnecessarily in A&E departments and those denied basic entitlements because of an under-resourced, underdeveloped, primary care service. The approach put forward in these motions is intelligent and if acted upon by Government would make an immediate difference and alleviate the plight of many within our society who are isolated, vulnerable and in need of support.

The motions correctly assert that what civilises a society, what makes it caring, is the provision of a reasonable, decent, fair, just and vibrant health service. What

is critical is that these motions call on the Congress, on this Conference, to promote the public sector to be at the heart of the response to the current crisis. We must embrace this challenge and resist with tenacity, attempts to further privatise our health services. At time when public service is regularly debunked, when more and more services are under threat, when the human dimension of the problem seems to be of little consequence, then we need to deliver this clear message from this Conference with considerable force. It is entirely unacceptable that the private sector and private markets should be seen as central to the improvement of the human condition. We should reject that concept. And it speaks volumes for the type of society that is emerging if those who are sick and cannot afford services are to become expendable under the current political direction that is being given to the health service. That is unacceptable.

But delegates, perhaps the most outrageous moral lapse on the part of Government is a failure to intervene directly when presented with real images of people within intellectual disability, people awaiting cancer services, people on waiting lists, suffering with parents and family members practically on their hands and knees begging for services in a society as wealthy as ours. These services should be available as a matter of right. This Executive Council and this Congress should resolve to do whatever needs to be done to turn this situation around. We support the motions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Conference putting Motion 22 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those Against. Abstentions. Motion is carried.

Motion 23 to the floor. Those in favour please show. Those Against. Abstentions. Motion is carried.

Thank you.

Conference, we are moving towards 11.30am which is due to be start of the Northern Ireland debate. What I propose to do is to take Motion 24 and 25 around the issue of water services and then we will be moving to the section on with regard to Northern Ireland debate. If there is time then we come back again to the motions which are 26,27,28, ok?

So can I have the mover to Motion 24 from NIPSA please. Can I ask the mover for 25 and seconders to also come forward. Go ahead, Jim, thanks.

Jim Welsh, NIPSA

Jim Welsh, NIPSA moving Motion 24. I don't think there is anybody in this hall who believes that the policy of privatisation of water services is a truly better and decent way to provide public services. There is clearly no justification for the so called economic arguments that have been put forward for transferring public services such as water to private sector profit makers.

As you know, in our case Northern Ireland Water Service is current on a path to a Government owned company and let me explain the consequences of that, because I think the motion itself is fairly self explanatory. So let me explain the consequences of what other unions will recognise as the process which does not give proper consultation, certainly does not provide any negotiation and the outcome is largely set in tablets of stone. Collectively the unions in the water service in Northern Ireland have lost 160 jobs so far. We have 100 more targeted to go in the current financial year. We have got PPPs which will take 70% of treated water in Northern Ireland and most of the major sewage treatment works to the private sector, taking further jobs with them. And plans for practically every scheme that is intended to improve the infrastructure to be done under Public Private Partnerships. Just this week I have received the report on Feelforce Management which is consultant speak for the members of our unions who provide services to the public, which actually demonstrates that another 100 jobs can be saved in 'efficiency savings'. The ultimate job losses, we believe, in our current industry is likely to be half of the current workforce, if the financial savings that are targeted are reached. On top of that, we have the scandal of Government making its own staff apply for their own jobs in competition with anybody else in the wider world. On the basis, apparently, of a skill shortage which the employer has failed to identify let alone address, and to compound the problems for staff in water service, the Government is actively looking and have employed consultants at a cost of half a million pounds a year, to investigate the potential for private sector investment in [GoCo](#). [GoCo](#) which is now, by the way, going to be called Northern Ireland Water Limited, so it is going to be a private company in all but operation and in name.

We have also discovered that the Government department concerned, DRD, is currently on a path of spending £9 million of public funds to get the [GoCo](#) – almost £8million of which is being spent on consultants and legal advice. We have identified that the infrastructure deficit that everybody keeps bladdering on about is only actually half of what the Government says it is. It is not £3billion, it is £1.2billion and the regulator in England and Wales does not allow the companies over there to spend huge amounts of money maintaining the infrastructure in pristine condition. If it ain't broke don't fix it and you don't get the money for it.

So what we have got is a process that is trying to bluff everybody that the infrastructure problems are greater than they are and therefore the charges need to be twice as much as they ought to be. Does that stop the whole process? No.

All these issues point to what has been described as “death by a thousand cuts”. Thanks Eamon, you gave me that one. We believe that the responsibility of Government, Governments North and South, is to protect such services throughout Ireland from the profit makers. The motion calls on both Governments to legislate, to prevent water being given away to private profit. And yes we need to run campaigns and yes we need to be real about them and we need to get all of our members out on the streets to protest against this.

One question I will ask you before the light hits me. I was not able to be here yesterday for the Secretary of State, Northern Ireland’s speech to Conference. I had to go to the dentist so I was suffering from some injections anyway. But I understand that the Secretary of State told us, told you, that we have to go ahead with the Water Reform process and we have to put in water charges in order to get money to spend on schools and hospitals. Did you politely applaud? Or did you get up and walk out? Because if you didn’t get up and walk out then you are not opposing water charges, you are not opposing water reform and what I will say to the Secretary of State is that all the political parties who were elected in the British election from Northern Ireland are opposed to water charges and he needs to recognise that. If he is not prepared to recognise that the democratic decisions of the people in Northern Ireland then maybe for him it is time to go. Thanks very much.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Is there a seconder for Motion 24?

Billy Lynn, NIPSA

Billy Lynn, NIPSA to second Motion 24. I think Jim Welsh has explained why NIPSA is opposed to water charges. And I unfortunately was in the hall yesterday when the Northern Ireland Secretary of State addressed Conference and I did hear him. I understand that Jim was away at the dentist, I don’t have that problem myself. I listened with interest to Peter Hain. Peter Hain said that he had to bring in additional water charging in order to improve the water and sewage infrastructure in Northern Ireland. There is a myth going around that we don’t pay for our water – of course we pay for our water. We pay for our water through our domestic rates and we have been paying ever since domestic rates came in. What the Minister is talking about is additional charges which could be £400 to £750 per year. Peter’s right we do need more money. Where did the money go from our rates that we have been paying? It most certainly didn’t go in to improving the sewage and water system.

I remember Peter Hain like many of you as a young radical many years ago taking his stance against apartheid in South Africa. I remember Peter Hain

urging boycotts of South African goods and urging boycotts of the South African rugby team. My union is in favour of boycotting the water charges. My union is in favour of a mass campaign of non-payment of water charges in order to defeat this additional taxation upon ordinary working people. Peter says we need to introduce it because we need the money – we don't have the money. Peter Hain – if your Government hadn't illegally invaded Iraq and spent billions of pounds on that war we would have sufficient money not just for water but all the other public services that needs demands.

We will continue to campaign against the water charges for the rights of each individual to have proper water facilities and I urge other unions here to join us in that campaign. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Ok, can we have a mover to Motion 25 please.

Jim Donnelly, GMB

Chair, Congress, Jim Donnelly, moving Motion 25, GMB. Conference Direct Rule Ministers want our water service privatised for ideological reasons. To cover up years of underinvestment they want to impose annual water charges of on average £450 per household up to a maximum of £750 with annual increases on top. The service is then to be handed over to private companies interested only in profit. Instead of our money helping to run and upgrade the water service much will be creamed off by private companies. The unions have already taken industrial action targeted at the Minister and management to demonstrate opposition to the proposals and the failure of management to negotiate. The unions have been successful in our dealings with the Northern Ireland political parties, district councils, community groups and the public. There is total opposition from all these groups to the Government's water reform proposals. The only people who believe in the proposals and are driving the establishment of GoCo are the Minister and his senior civil servants. This is a real bread and butter issue for many people. The facts of the situation are clear. People in Northern Ireland earn less and have a higher cost of living. There are more people in receipt of unemployment-related benefits in Northern Ireland than any other region, without the additional burden of having to pay water charges.

Experience of water privatisation has shown a significant increase in water charges to customers, massive profits to shareholders. The majority of water services controlled by a few transnational companies – in a fact a cartel. Significant job losses, no discernible improvements in water quality or service delivery. Evidence of the failure and cost of the public purse of the involvement

through public finance initiatives and the Public Private Partnership on the delivery of public services in the UK are well known and documented. The four unions that make up the water service group have sought to negotiate with the Minister on water service management. At every turn and at every level we have been frustrated by the dogma of the Government's position. Management have broken agreements, set aside established negotiating machinery and sought to treat members in the water services as second class civil servants. All of this even before the Government owned company has been established. The trade union members have voiced significant concerns about the changes to their terms and conditions, job losses and pension changes. We also call upon Congress to call upon the Government to introduce legislation to prevent the privatisation of water of water services, to support all affiliates engaged in the opposition of the privatisation of water services and private sector involvement in the supply of water and sewage services and oppose all proposals to implement separate domestic water charges for households. Access to clean drinking water cannot be determined by your ability to pay. Access to water is a basic human right. Northern Ireland water is saver in public hands. Support the water workers, oppose the privatisation and oppose the water charges. Thank you Conference.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Seconder to Motion 25.

Albert Mills, ATGWU

Congress, Chair, Albert Mills, Transport and General Workers Union seconding motion 25.

Everything has been said about the opposition to water charges and we know we have the communities and we have the MPs in Northern Ireland with us. There are very few people this week who have used props, I am going to use one because in 1993 I led a campaign on behalf of my union, ATGWU, in opposition to the then Thatcher Government, opposing water charges and I am going to read out a letter. This is from Dr Margery Molan, MP, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary on House of Commons, and believe it or not that is the original, and you can pick things out and keep them for future reference.

"Dear Mr Mills", it is dated 10 July, 1995. "Thank you for your letter regarding water privatisation in Northern Ireland. Labour is fully opposed to the privatisation of the water industry. As recently as last Wednesday I called upon the Government to categorically rule out water privatisation and Labour Shadow Northern Ireland Minister for Energy", and wait until you hear this name, "John Spellar, has campaigned against it consistently during the last year".

Campaigned against it! This the same Spellar that we sat down with who said that he would vigorously impose it.

Water privatisation has been a failure in the UK with water quality suffering subsequently due to lack of investment. A recent report by the GMB has revealed that over 90% of the people of Northern Ireland are opposed to privatising this essential service. And Labour will do all we can to ensure that never happens.

Do you remember the debate during the election of people calling people liars? And the pressure the Prime Minister was put under? If they are not lying and they want to honour their commitments and they say the same when they are in Government, when they are in opposition, I am calling on the Secretary of State to either hold up what was said in that letter and oppose and withdraw water privatisation or resign. Support the motion.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

I now open common debate on both motions.

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council

Eamon McCann, Derry Trades Council in support of both motions and I rise specifically to argue for the importance of the non-payment of water charges campaign and the defeat of privatisation of our water industry. I think these two issues are inextricably linked and I think that the link and the closeness of the link is not acknowledged by us on some occasions with sufficient clarity.

The purpose of water charges is to provide a revenue flow for a private company. That is why they are being introduced. Any doubt about that matter should have been removed for us all that when the Treasury in 2003 made it plain to any Executive or future Executive in Northern Ireland, that the revenue from water charges, despite what some of the local parties have appear to think, that revenue from water charges could not be used under the reform and reinvestment initiative to support borrowing for infrastructural or any other purpose in the North. This incidentally gives a direct lie to what Peter Hain said yesterday when he said that water charges could be used and would be used to support spending on social services. I think it was Terry Kelleher said this morning that he didn't know whether Peter Hain was a bad mathematician or a liar. He is not a bad mathematician – he knows the situation and Peter Hain was lying when he said that – he is a liar.

The Treasury has made it plain that the flow from water charges is to be given to a private company and therefore it is not public money at all. It won't be public money. That is why. It is not just a coincidence. It is not for administrative neatness. That is why new Labour has made it plain that water charges will be introduced simultaneously with the creation of the GoCo and brothers and sisters, I have often heard it said over that last year and so, that the GoCo will be a step towards privatisation. No it is not. The creation of a GoCo is privatisation. A GoCo will be incorporated under company law like any other company and not subject to public scrutiny by elected representatives.

We talk all the time here in the trade union movement about the way sometimes we are a bit isolated. There are concerns and the concerns of the wider community are that perhaps we have lost our place in society, particularly in Northern Ireland. Well brothers and sisters if we ever want it back now is the time and this is the issue. 75% of people minimum in every survey show that they are against privatisation and the job losses that go with it. 85% minimum show in every survey that they are against the introduction of water charges. The situation is that we are open to it, therefore a public campaign of a sizeable determination which will defeat water charges and thereby defeat privatisation. I say to you that without defeating water charges it is futile, it is impractical, it is illogical to expect to defeat privatisation. These issues go together. That is the way forward brothers and sisters and we go forward in that way by mobilising people, give me 10 seconds, by mobilising people in that campaign on a basis which has got nothing to do with the community they chance to come from. We not only can defeat privatisation and water charges, we can begin to transform the political situation in the North to the advantage of all working people.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Thanks very much. Before you speak, the President is watching from the back the very bad habits that have developed in the five minutes that he has been out, so please observe the lights. Thank you.

Trisha Harbinson, UNISON

President, Congress, Trisha Harbinson, UNISON supporting motions 24 and 25. Water is a fundamental human right. Being a mother who is a full time worker with only the one wage coming in to the home, and the normal bills in running a home, I won't be able to make savings anywhere within my budget to pay the extra cost for water charges. It is hard enough coping with the general increases in bills coming into the home, such as the rates and the increased cost of living, which is not reflected in my wages. If these costs come in, myself and many more will be put on the poverty line. The effect of these charges will increase the

stress on the more vulnerable in society which leads to a decrease in the mental and physical health of trying to find the money to pay for these increases.

In October 2004, Government was exposed for double dealing in the introduction of additional water charges and the proposed privatisation of the water service. The charging systems proposed will have a detrimental impact on the most vulnerable in society who are least able to pay. Privatisation of the water will be a disaster for water service workers and the public. A full equality impact assessment must take place on the policy and proposals. They must be considered in light of other key related issues such as the return of the rating system, levels of fuel, poverty, increase deprivation and health and equality. I support.

Una Murphy, NUJ

Colleagues, Una Murphy, NUJ, National Union of Journalists supporting these motions. As a journalist living and working in Wales for several years I would like to tell you about a story I made for television about the water services and water charges.

Let me tell you about the Welsh experience. There are 1.5 million people living there like Northern Ireland and water has been privatised by a company called Dwr Cymru, Welsh Water. My investigation was assisted by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, who are very concerned about water meters in poor households. Basically if you had no money for the meter it meant that you had no water to make the baby's bottles, you had no water to wash the clothes. People were so ashamed by the situation that many of them asked to be interviewed in silhouette for the television programme I was involved in. The television programme was made, questions were asked in the Welsh Assembly and it was established that cutting off water via these meters was actually illegal.

But I think this cautionary tale tells us that water services should not be left to market forces. They should not be dictated to by profit. It is a utility that everyone needs and it should be provided equally for all. I basically wish to support these motions and expect my support for the campaign that follows.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Delegates we will now take the vote on Motion 24. All those in favour. Against. Abstentions. Carried unanimously.

Now the vote on Motion 25. All in favour please show. Against. Abstentions. Carried unanimously as well. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, we need to move to the Northern Ireland debate and I want to call on Peter Bunting to move the section of the report.

Wednesday 22 June

Northern Ireland Debate

(Principal EC Report reference: Section 2, Chapter 2 “Northern Ireland”)

Peter Bunting, Assistant General Secretary, Congress

President, comrades, I wish to join in the welcome to you given by our President, Brendan, by our Lord Mayor and the Secretary of State. The fact that the Conference of Congress is once again in the historic city of Belfast is a deserved testimony and a recognition of the role of workers in Northern Ireland, afforded by our trade union colleagues in the Republic.

Much has happened since John Freeman chaired our last Conference in the Waterfront. Congress in Northern Ireland has made significant progress in developing the concept of social partnership and we have strengthened our links with the business, farming and community sectors. This work continues to deepen through our project with Concordia and also the robust work we do on the various European bodies which include Intereg and Peace II.

I, like you, was most encouraged by the comments of the Lord Mayor on Tuesday morning. In his address he detailed the outstanding role of trade unions in making Northern Ireland a more peaceful and progressive society. In his comments he reminded us all of the contribution that the trade union movement can make in promoting the wellbeing of others. He went further last evening in his tribute to this movement. Those of us who had the privilege of being in the City Hall last evening could not feel anything but pride and honour afforded to us by our first citizen. We look forward to working closely with him in his year of office and we can assure him that the tributes accorded to our movement will be honoured and carried forward.

Peter Hain in his speech yesterday highlighted a number of issues for us all. He stressed the important issues facing us as a movement and these covered the

vital role of trade unions, the need for a democratic shared Government in Northern Ireland, the end of all paramilitary activity, the need for political stability, economic progress and social justice. Let me deal with these issues before I move on to other challenges he placed before us and challenges we place before him.

We need no convincing on the vital role of trade unions but our Government appears to do so. In the past years Congress has played that vital role. What has been the reward? Well I will tell you. Successive administrations have marginalised our representative role on a wide range of public bodies including health and education. But we welcome the signs of change and advancement. In his concluding remarks the Secretary of State referred to us as a valuable element in moving Northern Ireland forward. What more can we say about the need for a democratic shared Government in Northern Ireland? Let me say this again. This movement believes in a democratic and devolved administration. The needs of our people can only be served by such structures. Today I renew the pledge of this movement to support our democrats. While Direct Rule remains we are failing. Congress is not in the failure business and as I speak unions are engaging with local politicians and political parties to move Northern Ireland forward.

In the context of political progress we must not fail to once again condemn the evil and destructive influence of paramilitarism. Again on your behalf I call for the total disbandment of all such organisations. I call for clear and unambiguous statements from every quarter that the war is over and arms are gone. Secretary of State, Conference, this goal is part of our mission. Therefore in this part of my contribution, Conference, let me again reiterate that we demand a devolved Government. We demand an end to paramilitarism in all its forms and we want to work in an inclusive, genuine partnership for the good of Northern Ireland.

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Let me now move to the economy. In his contribution the Secretary of State highlighted the issue of skills and employment. He went on to mention investment and competitiveness. Congress is playing a vital role in this arena to include the Bilateral Forum about which I shall say more shortly and the Economic Development Forum. This forum is a social partnership body which advises Government on a wide range of social and economic matters. Currently it has a number of subgroups looking at infrastructure, skills, innovation and enterprise. We are playing a significant role in each of these subgroups and though our programme on Life Long Learning and Union Learning reps making a contribution to making Northern Ireland a more attractive location for investment. We acknowledge that a more highly skilled workforce will also sharpen our competitive edge. Our movement will not tolerate a low wage economy. The road to peace and prosperity rests with out resolve to work together. It rests also with the requirement to renew our skills and abilities on a basis which is designed

to meet the challenges of a global economy. During my time in Congress I have stressed the need to tackle the need for economic activity and I welcome for the first time in five years hearing a politician in Northern Ireland address the issue of economic inactivity. And purposes for those of you who don't realise the total workforce in Northern Ireland in employment is 737,000 people, 100,000 of whom are self-employed. There are 35,000 unemployed and the most startling and despairing statistic is what is deemed the 'economic inactive', of whom there are 528,000 people on benefit. So practically for every one person in employment or as an employee, we have one person either unemployed or who is economically inactive.

I have suggested that this anchor on our progress to a sustainable economy must be lifted. Therefore, it is with some satisfaction that I welcome the comments made by Peter Hain on this issue.

Secretary of State, through our memorandum on the new understanding reached with Government we have the opportunity to catch up with other regions of the UK. Let us work together with you and your ministerial team to place Northern Ireland at the forefront of economic development. Let us also learn from the actions taken by the Government and other players in the Republic of Ireland. Through investment in education and a progressive attitude to fiscal and other economic incentives the Republic has placed its people at the forefront of economic and social development. Within the context of progress on the peace process and our developing links with all the political parties in Northern Ireland we now have the capacity and opportunity to move forward.

Earlier I referred to the Memorandum of Understanding with Government. Section 2 of the report gives you a measure of detail in regard to this development. Conference, this is only a beginning. Our aim is to move to a model of partnership with Government which will allow us to progress the workers' agenda. In this context of partnership let me address our local political parties. Friends, and indeed this great movement is your friend, at the top of our agenda it is a desire to work with you, all of you. Your return to Stormont will be a clear indication to the world that Northern Ireland means business. Your return to leadership will encourage this movement to work in partnership. A progressive partnership which will ensure that not only will the people of Northern Ireland prosper but also will give us the opportunity to show the generosity of spirit to our brothers and sisters from other nations of Europe and the world. It is important that Northern Ireland society takes forward the responsibilities that Conference determined for all of us during our debate on migrant workers. Shortly we shall be adding to the resources of the Northern Ireland Committee with the appointment of a Global Solidarity Officer. This appointment will enable us to give impetus to our deliberations.

Earlier I said that I would comment on some of the economic issues facing trade unions in Northern Ireland and comment on the challenges we would put to Peter

Hain. Secretary of State we take issue with you regarding your comments on regional rates and water charges. We condemn the sustained attacks by previous administrations on the public sector in education, in health, in local Government. We condemn the proposed cuts in the number of civil servants. We condemn your attitude to a valid and just wage increase by NIPSA which resulted in a 49 week dispute. We condemn more vehemently the adversarial nature of the campaign waged by an alleged Labour Government against the largest indigenous trade union in Northern Ireland – that's what we condemn.

We are also conscious of the looming spectre of the outcome of the Review of Public Administration. And Secretary of State, we remain on standby to oppose, if necessary, in a collaborative manner.

In the recent Government and local elections all of the Northern Ireland political parties announced their opposition to water charges and the heavier burden on rates. You now have the opportunity to recognise the historic unity of our politicians on these issues. This Conference calls on you to stop water charges, stop attacks on the public sector and stand up to the Treasury mandarins. This Conference asks you to convince Government that they must fund the infrastructural deficit of water and sewerage. Secretary of State, respect the voice of the people and their elected representatives.

Within this last few days Government has announced that it is intending to consult on the priorities of budget for 2006-2008. We are aware from comments made at the Economic Development Forum and also in comments from the Department of Finance and Personnel that there will be no additional resources for Northern Ireland above the position set out in the Budget 2004 publication. Secretary of State, we know you want to honour your commitments to us of yesterday. This can only come to pass if you and your Ministerial team work with this movement, other social partners and our democratic politicians to secure additional resources for Northern Ireland. We look forward to pursuing these issues with you through the Bilateral Forum.

Finally, comrades, let me stress that this movement is about peace. It is about quality life and quality work. It is about the future of our children and the health and wellbeing of all of our citizens whether they be in work or out of work. The Northern Ireland trade union movement is intent on achieving these goals.

And let me knowledge Tom Moore and Ann Hope, one recently retired – Ann on secondment with us and Tom retiring at the end of July. Both have made huge contributions to the work of this movement, not just in Northern Ireland but across these islands. I would ask you to join with me in wishing them a long and happy retirement and I am confident, as now doubt you who know them are, that they will continue to strive on behalf of workers and the disadvantaged.

I commend this report to you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, we are moving – sorry.

Patricia McKeown, UNISION

Delegates, President, Patricia McKeown, UNISION to speak on this section of the report and to express my deep concern at a clear omission by the Secretary of State yesterday. We met with him within a couple of weeks of his taking up office. We invited him to address this Conference, we are glad that he did. We asked him to give assurances on a range of issues. He did on some but as Peter has just said, he disappointed us on others. But one issue to which he made only passing reference simply by saying the words, is the most serious of omissions if we are genuinely to seek commitment from this Government to the peace process. We asked him to emphasise the importance to this society of equality and human rights. This is still profoundly discriminatory society. Yesterday in the maps of the General Secretary produced, and we know why, there was white that a was wasteland. But there is another set of coloured maps that fill that in and they have recently been produced by Government itself. And what they demonstrate very vividly is that discrimination is rising again. Disadvantaged is rising again, multiple disadvantaged is rising again, facing the levels we have in the 70's, the agenda is slipping back. We are in trouble and unless we have clear Government commitment to equality and human rights being central to our peace process, then there is no prospect of that peace process being built on other than shifting sands.

A clear message this morning from Conference, please, to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to both Governments – you are not going to bury the equality and human rights agenda because this movement will not let you.

David Bell, CWU

Thank you President, for your indulgence. David Bell, CWU to seek an update to Section 2, Chapter 2 of the Annual Report and in particular the report on Motion 36 at Appendix 9, page 183, where it is stated that Counteract is now facing financial difficulties. It is of concern that in a situation where Congress is pledging further support to migrant workers, where there is an upsurge in sectarianism and racism in the North and the South of the island, with the need for Counteract and its services is arguably at its most needed, that Counteract is facing financial difficulties. And I think it is important therefore to get an up to date report from an Northern Ireland Officer to outline what financial support is

needed from affiliates today and from Government in the future to ensure its survival.

Peter Bunting, Assistant General Secretary

President, Conference, just a brief reply to that. The up to date position on that is that is despite having the Community Relations Council Funds withdrawn and funding withdrawn from Counteract, Counteract is alive and well and will succeed and as I speak there are meeting ongoing both yesterday and in the past, I suppose month as well, to ensure the continued survival of Counteract. And Counteract, I am very confident, will survive. It does need funding and it does need work as well from our affiliates, paid work by the way, to ensure its continuation and it is more important now, and also particularly with the anti-racist activity, with racism so prevalent to Northern Ireland. But I am confident that Counteract will survive but it also needs the continued support of the trade union movement and its affiliates. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can I move to Motion 32 which is in the name of the Communications Workers' Union, Northern Ireland.

Eamon Cooke, CWU UK

President, Conference, Eamon Cooke moving Motion 32 on behalf of the Communications Workers' Union, UK.

As a union representing 180,000 postal workers, the CWU in the UK is acutely aware of the important social and economic role performed by Royal Mail and the dangers of privatising such a vital public service. At a time of upheaval within the industry we believe full or part privatisation of Royal Mail would be a disaster for our members and for postal users across Great Britain and the North of Ireland. We also believe that there would be a serious domino effect across the economies across both sides of the border as other attempts at privatisation have already demonstrated.

Over recent years a combination of Royal Mail's cost-cutting renewal plans, huge operational changes and Postcom's restrictive regulatory and price regime have hit service standards and already raised serious questions about Royal Mail's long term inability in the future of its universal service obligation. Conference, we need to remember that for decades the UK enjoyed a first class postal service that was the envy of the world. The industry was efficient and highly profitable,

contributing billions of pounds to the Treasury coffers, offering value for money with a high quality public service. As Royal Mail's own accounts show, published record losses didn't reflect any fundamental lack of profitability in the core letter business but rather the impact of a number one off items associated with redundancy payments and restructuring of the business. Frontloading these once off costs of the first year of the renewal plan distorted Royal Mail's true financial position and enabled Chairman, Allan Leighton, to claim a turnaround in the company's fortunes and a process giving himself a six figure performance bonus. The reality is that Royal Mail remains a profitable concern operating on a growing sector of the UK economy. Royal Mail has recently reported profits of above £508million in the year April 2000, of which our colleagues in the North of Ireland have contributed greatly to that success.

This, Conference, flies in the face of the claim that public ownership is buy out of commercial success, but indeed demonstrates a success story in the public sector.

Despite assurances from the Labour Government that there are no plans to privatise Royal Mail, Allan Leighton has publically called for part privatisation of the business. Under his reported plans, postal employees will end up with 20% in the form of shares. 31% will be sold on the open market, leaving the Government only 49% minority stake. Conference, privatisation is not the answer to industry's problems. Instead of delivering a quality service to the public, the emphasis will be on cutting costs, delivering profits to private shareholders and more importantly cutting jobs. As signatories to the Warwick Agreement, the CWU intend to ensure that the Labour Government delivers on its manifesto and its commitment not to privatise Royal Mail.

A long term programme of investment rather than a short term privatisation is the key to the postal industry's future. If we want a postal service fit for the 21st Century we need to address the legacy of generations of under funding.

The CWU want to see a genuine renewal of the industry but driven by long term investment, modern offices and equipment, improved health and safety standards, improved recruitment, training and security measures and improved services for the public, but above all most importantly, a true long term investment in the workforce.

Conference, earlier on a colleague said we needed to stop dreaming and he asked could we stop privatisation rather than just oppose it. Well in 1992 the Government proposed privatisation of Royal Mail and a successful campaign, helped by all of yourselves – all of the unions over two years – stopped it. In 1994 the CWU successfully campaigned and stopped the privatisation of the post office, so we have done it then, we have done it in the past and with your support we certainly do it in the future.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Do we have a seconder?

Can I ask the movers of the next motion from Amicus to come to the front. Can I also ask people coming from this side, if they are going to come up to speak could they move up here because this screen blocks us if they are sitting down there and we can't really see them. Ok, go ahead delegate.

Stephen Goddin, CWU UK

Conference, Stephen Goddin, CWU Northern Ireland to second the motion.

Conference, the Communications Workers' Union has seen first hand how the privatisation of a major employer, British Telecom, resulted in the loss of thousands and thousands of jobs. Conference, make no mistake the present Executive Board of the Royal Mail are determined to take the post office into the private sector. Their leadership, appointed by a Labour Government, have already carried out so-called cost cutting exercises which have decimated the industry resulting in the loss of thousand of jobs.

The Communications Workers' Union has already launched a number of initiatives aimed at influencing this Labour Government as the mover of the motion has already related. We have lobbied the Westminster Parliament, we have made a significant contribution to Warwick Agreement, we were instrumental in achieving a definitive statement in the Labour Party manifesto prior to the general election. Conference, the CWU believe that any attempt to privatise the post office will have a disastrous effect on the economy both in the North and the South of this island. Private companies cherry picking who, what and where they deliver is surely a recipe for disaster. Conference, the members of the CWU Northern Ireland who work in this industry have, over many years, continued to serve our communities in often dangerous, threatening and bad times. Indeed some have paid the ultimate price.

In closing, Conference, the Communications Workers' Union will continue to lobby this Government, be it through Messrs Johnson, Hain, Bryan or Blair, to ensure the post office remains a public utility. To Allan Leighton, the Royal Mail board, PostCom and anyone else who cares to listen our message is clear – give our members the respect and dignity that long term job security brings. They most definitely earned it. Conference, I thank you for listening and ask you for your wholehearted support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Can I put the Motion 32, Postal Services, to Conference. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Motion passed unanimously.

Can I move to Motion 33 in the name of Amicus.

Kevin McAdam, Amicus

President, Conference, delegates, Kevin McAdam, Amicus moving Motion 33. The long process of decline in employment in traditional industries in Northern Ireland continues. In the textile sector, for example, employment is expected to fall to 18,000 by 2010. Competition from the Far East is a major factor in the decline of this rapidly disappearing industry. We cannot compete with Bangladesh and China in the clothing and textile sector. On the other hand if we loose these traditional jobs where are the new jobs to come from? The food processing sector is holding its own but is not expected to add to the 20,000 jobs in food companies over the rest of the decade. In the engineering sector there are about 30,000 employed. At best these numbers will remain stable. Employment in the construction industry has remained static over the past few years and is not expected to change. Employment in the manufacturing industry as a whole continues to decline. It fell below 100,000 at the start of this decade and is now below 90,000.

Strategy 2010 has set a target of 132,000 net new jobs in Northern Ireland by the year 2010. This is a target which must be reached if Northern Ireland is to replace jobs lost through redundancy and closures. We are now half way through this decade and the number of employees has grown by about 50,000. The target of adding another 80,000 net new jobs on top of that in the next five years is a daunting one. It can only be achieved by moving up the value chain. The growth sectors in the future will be in electronics, telecoms, software and health technologies. But if we are to attract these industries we have to have a workforce which is among the best trained and best educated in the world. This is the problem, and as Peter Hain pointed out yesterday, there are still skills shortages and they will become more critical as time passes. While we are loosing some jobs to cheaper competition in the Far East, we are not gaining others because we do not have the right skills mix. The solution of this problem lies with the education system, public sector training agencies and employee investment in training and retraining. It is a political problem which has to be addressed by Government, education experts, state training agencies and greater private sector investment in training and upskilling. That is why we are calling for roundtable discussions involving the trade unions and all interested

parties to produce urgent workable recommendations so that the divisions set out in Strategy 2010 can be realised.

Conference, we have to change. We have got to adapt change and upskill. To do that we need to work with Government, universities, colleges and the private sector employers to equip our workforce for that challenge. I move.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Kevin. Secunder.

Dwer McKerr, Craigavon Trades Council

Mr President, Congress, fellow delegates, Dwer McKerr ATGWU on behalf of Craigavon Trades Council. I as a Shop Seward working in the fractious and fragile textile industry for one, along with those I represent, am fearful for my job. Those fears are further compounded by recent publication of the 25th Annual Review of the Northern Ireland Economy. The review states that a high level of public spending, whilst driving unemployment figures to an all time low, masks the serious decline in manufacturing. With one in three people working in Northern Ireland employed in the public sector, the reported stated that in the period between 2002 and 2004, proportionately Northern Ireland lost more manufacturing jobs than anywhere within the UK.

I therefore urge Congress to actively engage with local politicians with the view to establishing a strategic manufacturing taskforce, in which it is pivotal that trade unions play an integral and central role. As trade unionists we have the knowledge and know how to assist with and implement plans to ensure the development of a strategic process and regenerative manufacturing core base within our shores. I ask you to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague. Any other speakers to Motion 33?

Roberta Doble, ATGWU

Roberta Doble, ATGWU, Shop Steward in Shortts. I work in Shortts – I am a Shop Steward there and it is one of the largest manufacturers in Northern Ireland. In the last 10-15 years we have seen the loss of the ship yard, Mackeys, and other like industries. In the loss of each of these we have lost skills and the knowledge which was at one time the best in the world. It is essential that we

have a strategy to develop and maintain and retain and indeed relearn the relevant skills within our communities. Call centres and checkouts are not the answer. Apparently the pay off at Rover is not a problem. There is plenty of work for these people – stacking shelves. It is an injustice that the skills, the knowledge and the crafts learned by so many are being passed on to so few. I ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Eugene McGloone, ATGWU

President, Congress, Eugene McGloone, Transport and General Workers Union speaking in support of motion 33.

When I was ploughing through the agenda for Conference I came across motion 33 and I have to say, that despite what has been said yesterday, for me this is perhaps the most significant motion on the agenda and we all have our favourites. And it is simply because it deals with something that is vitally important. There is only one motion but there have been a line of speakers in respect of it and I think that in itself indicates the importance and significance of the motion. But I did wonder when I looked at it whether or not manufacturing in Northern Ireland should have had a question mark after it. Because it is obvious to anyone looking around the greater Belfast area that manufacturing is almost a matter that has passed into history. I think it is something that we use an open top bus tours to show people where we used to have industry.

Belfast is Buzzing was a slogan we used a few years ago. But the only thing that is buzzing in Belfast at the moment is the buzz around the building of new shopping centres. It is certainly not the buzz of work shops – the work that we used to know. And Conference, we all know that for our economic survival and wellbeing what we need and what we depend upon is building something here and selling it somewhere else. That is what brings money into the economy. That is what brings revenue in and if we don't do that we will not be able to sustain ourselves in any sort of economic wellbeing whatsoever. What we can't do is that we can't all work in Tesco and then shop in Sainsburys. We can't all work in Sainsburys and shop in Dunnes. We can't all work in call centres because they don't last too long. They disappear too quickly as soon as someone else will do it cheaper, they will move on. And I am sure that I am not the only one in this hall who has had the 6.30 call in the evening with a two second delay on it, someone wanting to tell me about their Barclaycard.

But in supporting this motion it presumes a number of things. It presumes that we will have an administration in Northern Ireland to talk to. If we don't have an administration in Northern Ireland to talk to – to turn a phrase – we will probably continue to talk to the wall. That is the British Government. Because they have been a serial culprit in diluting the six counties of its manufacturing base by neglecting it. We have heard from Dwer McKerr about the concerns of the textile industry, we have heard from my colleague, Roberta, about the concerns in heavy engineering and light engineering and the reason that that is happening is because it is cheaper to do it elsewhere. We have seen big business in Northern Ireland take its business to the Far East because it can get it done cheaper and I know from my own experience that there are an awful lot of people working in the textile industry who have seen their jobs exported, who were at the point of exporting of the jobs, working for the minimum wage. That's unfair. Our Government needs to stand up and do something. Chairman, I commend the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Can we move to a vote on Motion 33? Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Unanimous decision. Thank you.

Can I now move to call on Anne Douglas who is the President of the STUC to give a fraternal address to Conference.

Anne Douglas, STUC - Fraternal Address

Thanks very much President, Congress. And thanks for the opportunity to address this year's congress on behalf of the STUC.

In April I completed my year long presidency of the STUC, and I said to Brendan last night, there is nothing quite as past as a past President. But what I am going to do is look forward and not back because for the STUC, and I think for the trade union movement as a whole this is an important year with issue to consider.

We need to grow our membership. We have to deal with further possible mergers of affiliates. We have to develop our relationship with a third term Labour Government in the UK and of course the developing devolution settlement in Scotland. And for the STUC, and the movement as a whole, the biggest challenge, I think, is increasing our membership through recruitment and organising.

At our Congress last year we launched our 'Unions Work' campaign which has been keeping the STUC busy over the last 12 months. It is aimed at promoting

the successes of the movement and the benefits of membership to the wider public 'Unions Work' has been a key feature of STUC Conferences and events.

And yes we've seen an increase in membership this year but as one Scottish Regional Secretary recently put it we've had an increase of nearly 6000 members and his union was responsible for 5000 of these! So we are running fast but we are only just creeping forward but we should take heart from any increase and build on progress. And we need new ways to attract and retain people within the movement, particularly young people.

The average age of a trade union member in Scotland is around 47 – we need to get that number down. And that's why, following the largest ever Scottish survey on the experiences of working students we launched our Trade Union Link Card. In this pilot year the card will give a free membership card for all working students, firstly in Edinburgh, with access to a range of employment support services and legal services provided by Thompson's the trade union solicitors.

That is fairly radical in my view and not without some risk. But the reality is, if the Scottish trade union movement is going to respond to the membership challenge, it is vital we engage with the growing student population on issues of concern for them and this initiative will give us the opportunity to do just that.

Our relationship with the Scottish Executive continues to develop and there is now an unprecedented level of involvement by trade unions in Scottish Governance through our Memorandum of Understanding with the Executive. And no, we haven't yet achieved the Social Partnership that we want. But, when one partner, and that's the business community, will not engage then that will not stop us from pursuing bi-lateral discussions. And yes we undoubtedly still have disagreements with the Executive but now there is a clearly identified process for fixing our fallouts and progressing our wider aims.

And we have seen tangible achievements because of this relationship and the way it has developed. The Scottish Parliament recently passed legislation to protect emergency workers and a member of the STUC General Council has been seconded to work on a campaign discouraging violence against public sector workers.

The Executive will soon, as part of their Enterprise in Education initiative, be piloting a programme of school visits so that a new generation of school pupils can learn how unions work from the current generation of Shop Stewards and Reps. And we are working closely with the Scottish Executive to tackle sectarianism in the workplace and in wider society. While clearly sectarianism manifests itself differently on these shores in comparison with Scotland there are bigoted behaviours and attitudes that characterise sectarianism in Scotland which must be stopped. The STUC and the Scottish Executive will working hard and will be working jointly to achieve this.

So I hope you agree Congress that many positives can be drawn from our relationship with Government in Scotland but we do still have frustrations. At one level the Scottish economy appears to be performing well with record numbers of people, in work, however this only tells half the story. There are still many people who are described as economically inactive in some areas of Glasgow – that's as much as 20%, so we are also working to look at the Lifelong Learning agenda to provide learning services and numeracy and literacy where we can reskill and where we are looking to upskill, so that we can get the number of economically inactive, those who want to work to be able to work.

And generally speaking we continue at the STUC to be frustrated at the quality of the debate on the Scottish economy which has been hijacked to some extent by business organisations, keen to push simplistic low regulation and red tape myths. Employer organisations bang on about the red herrings of business taxation and regulation. Conference, across the UK their vision is of a business environment free and unregulated, free to pollute, free to sprawl and despoil, with no fire, safety, employee or consumer protection.

And yes, the movement wants to see higher growth and more jobs but our vision is of a Scotland, which are not only a good place to do business, but also good places to live and work. And it is clear to me from your agenda being debated this week here that you too believe that quality of life is intrinsically linked with to quality work. Each is as important as the other.

Conference, before I finish I said at the outset thank you very much for the invitation. Unfortunately, due to illness the STUC's General Secretary, Bill Spiers is unable to be with you here this week and if I could crave your indulgence President, I do have a message from Bill to read out to Conference:

"Dear Sisters and Brothers, Comrades and Friends, and all the others,

"I am personally very sorry that my health prevents me being with you this week. The trade union links between Scottish and Irish workers have been important for decades, generations and even centuries, not just for our peoples, but as part of the development of a common agenda and consequent solidarity among the working peoples of the world.

"Ever since I started work at the STUC I have been more than aware of the strong links between us. Whether it was the contributions at our Annual Congress of fine comrades like Matt Merrigan and Terry Carlin; or the vital, constructive contacts we have at secretariat level, maintained powerfully today by David Begg, Peter Bunting and their colleagues; or the cooperation we have developed to make use of - usually quietly - Scottish/Irish historical and family connections, to help build a situation where common solidarity of the people who

build, shape and serve our lands as workers is more important than the things that divide us. All of these links are vital for us all.

“I look forward to this solidarity and all these practical links continuing, and developing productively.

“But I have to conclude by wishing all the very best to your President, Brendan Mackin. Brendan is someone who, like many in this hall, has made a massive contribution to the trade union movement, and the wider movement for a just, democratic world, in circumstances that most of the Scottish trade union movement have thankfully never had to face. I know from years of working with him that he is one of the very, very best, and I look forward to working with him and with you for a long time to come.”

President, Conference on behalf of Bill and on behalf of myself and indeed on behalf of the whole STUC, I wish you a very successful Conference and I wish you success into the future.

Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can we as a Conference send our best wishes to Bill Spiers. Bill Spiers has been a friend of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and indeed the Northern Ireland Committee for many, many years and not only has been a friend to us as a movement, he has also been a facilitator for this movement to go into many arenas and to see many examples of trade union good practice in operation and is always to the forefront of looking to cooperate with the Irish trade union movement and I send, personally, best wishes and I hope he is back soon on his feet and doing the work that he is always done for the Scottish trade union movement.

Conference, can I call for the adoption in full of Section 2 of the EC Report. Is that agreed? Ok, Congress, can I move now to our next speaker who is Trevor Ringland from the One Small Step Campaign. A lot of people may recognise Trevor from a previous existence when he was an Irish international rugby player and I know from watching him as a rugby fanatic who has for many, many years went to watch the game, he is certainly was one of the best and I think it is no surprise that Trevor has put the same commitment into trying to put something back into his community, looking for peace and looking for justice for people, as he did when he put on the green shirt, so Trevor Ringland.

Trevor Ringland – Presentation of “One Small Step”

Mr President, Conference thank you very much for this opportunity to address you. Someone did say to me recently that if you had more hair you would look like Trevor Ringland.

But I think in defining my own character, I would use the words of somebody who spoke to me when we discussed the complexities of the Irish identity and he was quoting from the Ulster poet, John Hewitt, but he used his own words and I think it provided a definition which I certainly feel reflects many of the differences it had upon me and I want to use these words at this stage, because I want you to reflect upon them as I speak. And there is a guy Jim McDonald who is chairman of the Trustees of the RUC's George Cross Foundation and we were in the garden to commemorate the men and women in the RUC who died, and it is just one example of the cost of conflict in a society that breaks down, and he said to me and I use these words, he said, 'I am a Belfast man, I am an Ulster man, I am an Irish man and I am British and those last two are interchangeable, and I am European and anyone who demeans any one part of me demeans me as a person.'

Certainly I think that reflects many of the different influences on my character and also I think as a society it enables us to adapt our society to embrace all those people who are coming into our society as it becomes increasingly diverse.

But the One Small Step campaign is about promoting a shared society in Northern Ireland and in Ireland and saying to people we have to build something where people here work together for our mutual benefit. It was launched in October 2003 and with the question that we posed to the people: Are the Troubles over? We saw it only as a question that the people here could answer. And people from the trade unions, the voluntary sector, from business, from sport and from education all got behind it and we said to people, it is your responsibility, it is up to you to take a small step in your worlds, to try and make a difference and if everybody takes that small step then that will add up to quite a lot and will start making a difference to our society.

As I said I use it in a rugby context because I was fortunate I played for Ireland. I represented all the people in this island and I experienced nothing but friendship, both North and South. And I remember the words, and we have to reflect that partition did happen and it is there, but I remember the words of an Irish rugby captain when he turned to his team before they ran out to play against England, and he said: 'Lads when you get out on to the pitch I want you to spread out but stick together.'

What we are also trying to do is to highlight that much work has been done. That many people over the years have continued to maintain relationships while others have been destroying them. And to try and say that there is an awful lot of good work going on. How often do we listen on a Monday morning to one petrol

bomb going through one window in one house in Northern Ireland and don't hear about the thousands of people, whether through work, through sport, through church, through whatever who have been building relationships over that same weekend. And it is trying to bring that to the fore and say these things are happening and we want to encourage others to take part.

When we launched one of the main problems that we tried to highlight was the sectarianism in our society. And Alan McBride, who lost his wife in the Shankill bomb, he stood up and with great strength and great commitment he said, while not taking anything away from the two people who planted the bomb, he said, I also blame the sectarian society that created their mindsets. We have also that growing problem of racism as our society becomes increasingly diverse. We have to ensure that this society welcomes those people and embraces the richness that they bring to our island.

And we also had Donna Maria McGillen, who was so badly injured in the Omagh bomb and she spoke at our launch. And you remember Donna and her husband, Gary were out shopping for their forthcoming wedding when the bomb went off and both were seriously injured in that bomb. The thing that struck me when I first met her was that they had gone on and they had got married and are recovering from their injuries but at this stage they also had this wee package called Tara, a beautiful baby girl. And to me it reflected the Northern Ireland and the Ireland that we want. It is up to us to help shape our characters I defined earlier so that it reflects a wee bit of all of us. It is also up to all of us to try and ensure that that child grows healthy and strong and it is also up to us all to try and protect that child, to make sure that what happened to her parents never happens to people in the future.

So One Small Step is also a challenge to each of us to try and do something personally to move out of our comfort zone, to try and make a difference and also to find ways in which we can help others to make take that small step. We ran a TV campaign in February where we said to people to live their lives without barriers. Move beyond where you are at this moment and time and suddenly you will find that things aren't the way you thought they were, that perceptions are not the reality that others tell you they are. And it is also about challenging our leaders.

There are two aspects of the character of this country. One is the marching season where we see the worst that our society can bring forward and we see July yet again blighted by this problem of people struggling live with each other as they both argue about their respective rights. The other is what I saw around the corner for our office in the centre of Belfast beside St Ann's Cathedral just after Christmas when the Tsunami Appeal was launched. £140,000 was put into a wooden barrel for various charities in the charity box outside St Ann's Cathedral before Christmas. When the Tsunami happened £1m was put into that same wooden barrel in two weeks. There were traffic jams, the police had to be

called, there were queues before that wooden barrel. So we as a society have to decide which reflects the true character of the people who live here and I have no doubt which I think reflects it and I have to start pressing the right buttons in stopping those who hate the most to determine the relationships between the rest of us.

I contacted someone from the BBC in the run up to the election to see if they would do something on the shared future document that was launched by the Government in March. He said, what was that again? He hadn't heard about it. He said, send me a copy Trevor and I will have a look at it. It is something that impacts on our economy, on all aspects of our society and he patronised me when he finished with the words; Trevor, he said, you know we have to make peace with our enemies. My personal viewpoint, and I said this to him, no in Ireland we have to make peace with our friends because friends have been kept apart over the last thirty years and friends have been called into situations where they have got into conflict. And it is time to rediscover those relationships and those friendships. We have extremes in this country and the extremes are like scrum halves on a rugby team. They are usually the smallest men, they are usually the most vociferous, they are always the most cantankerous, they always start the fights, they invariably drag the rest of us into them and they usually never take part in them themselves. And so it is about saying to them shut up and just play the game.

And I think that One Small Step is not about political correctness. It is about seriously challenging those who lead the conflict in our community and it about saying lets see what more we can do. There are examples – we have a stall out there. Celine O'Donnell from One Small Step is actually on that stall and she has some brochures which you could sign up to support our campaign. We have a website which Celine could direct you towards and it is signing up to the principles about making a stand, making a difference and encouraging others to make a difference.

If I can just finish by saying that Baroness May Blood said in her own inimitable style as a people we do not have time to be pessimistic. We have a society to build. Capital is a card. July, the marching season destroys one half of our tourist season in Northern Ireland. Can we really afford that in this current economic environment?

So we have as I say, let us embrace the future. Let us build relationships and stride to ensure that our past does not repeat itself. It is a marathon with no ending but at the end of it all it is a better tribute to those who died and suffered so much in the past that we continue to work and build a society that reflects the Britishness of our Irishness and the Irishness of our Britishness.

I participated in the Belfast marathon once and I took part in one leg and was standing in a normal park waiting for Mike the previous runner to arrive when I

saw this guy come through the gate. In the normal park there is a stretch of flat to run along and then there is a hill and everybody of course was at the top of the hill waiting for the next person to come. And I saw this guy come running through the gate and he was about 5ft 4, very clearly overweight, he had a bald head and he was lobster red and dripping in sweat and I could see he was on his last legs. As he ran down towards the bottom of the hill you could see that he was really struggling. As he got to the bottom of the hill he looked up and he gave another sigh and he headed up that hill. As he got half way up he looks into about five hundred people and he come out with those words, 'Bobby, where the f*** are you.'

So it is a marathon. Many people are tired. They need fresh legs, fresh ideas and inspiration and you guys, you can really play a major role in bringing that about. You have tremendous influence and we need your leadership.

Can I just say, finally, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Theologian who died in one of Hitler's jails, he said the future is about how our children will live. And that is a responsibility we all have. We know what the past tells them and what didn't work in the past and let's try and make sure that that never happens again.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

I think that what Trevor clearly demonstrated is that behind the image, perhaps sometimes a negative image, what happens here in the life of Northern Ireland and the fact that it is always the negative side that grabs the news, that behind it there is a tremendous lot of work that is going on and I can say that we in the trade union movement, the more we engage with people from our society at all levels and in all places, and in all parts, we find the same type of people working away and working away and working away. And I think myself that if our future is going to be built, it is going to be built upon the efforts those people, including those people within the One Step Up campaign. So thank you very much Trevor.

Can I also encourage delegates when they are in the hall over the next couple of days that the One Step Up campaign – that the leaflets are there, that the information is there about the thing and indeed for all the stands outside, as I say, I would encourage you to use them. It is very, very useful information. Ok.

I call on Peter.

President, Conference, in November 2003, in this very location the 'Adream' project for schools across Northern Ireland was launched to an audience of over 1,600 people including 1,000 pupils and the support of 300 representatives of the

trade union movement. As Chairman of the 'Adream' Project I have the pleasure to report that since then thousands of fantastic students creations celebrating creativity, citizenship and mutual respect have been posted from hundreds of schools to the onsite portal. These include poems, stories, artwork, drama pieces and music, now all captured for posterity and showcased on online to the global audience. And indeed following on from our successful innovation plans are underway to extend the project across the whole of the island and ultimately to link with schools across the world. In the first phase we are exploring the twinning of schools across the island with schools, hospitals and communities as far as Africa. I do encourage all of you to visit the 'Adream' stand to discuss our progress and our exciting expansion plans. And now today continuing the 'Adream' theme of cross-community outreach, promotion of respect and celebration of cultural diversity, I have the pleasure in association with the 'Adream' of introducing 'Afreeka' and 'Afreeka 2', a fantastic cross-community endeavour led Nickey Sutchel, the Belfast School of Music and Irene Reilly, a teacher in Beech Hill School and featuring the African drumming skills of parents and pupils from both one state school and one a catholic school, one from Ballymurphy and one from Loyalist East Belfast, a cross-community group of parents from the Belfast School of Music, giving a thought provoking and emotive piece, it clearly indicates that in spite of our past and our perceived differences, in going forward we surely can all beat from the same drum, and so I present Afreeka

Presentation of Afreeka

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Well, colleagues, could you please sit down a minute just for there is an old saying 'how do you follow that?' I would like to thank Nickey and Irene and the parents and pupils on behalf of Conference and all those who have engaged in making up Afreeka I would also pay a tribute to the Adream project's Frank McGonigle for what is a clear demonstration of success. I think it is something to be proud of. I think it is excellent so thank you.

Could I also say that during some of the debates we talked about migrants, we talked about asylum seekers, we talked about diverse societies and multi-cultural societies, I think in some respects we can see in that group a clear demonstration of the clear benefits that we can take the culture of another community and incorporate it into yours and I think that in itself augers well for the future. Because not only does it identify the whole thing with culture but if you notice within that group we had a generational thing between parents and pupils, and also the interesting thing is the community thing as well. That type of thing shows the kids from the Protestant community and the Catholic community and the parents from the Protestant community and the Catholic community, that

first of all their kids and first of all their parents and the more they engage the more they find out the more they have in common, so I would like to thank them very much from us.

Can I just say Congress that we are concluding the Conference. We didn't get through all of our business today and Standing Orders will be coming through with a new Standing Orders Report as to how we engage.

Can I also, if any of those who were at the City Hall last night that would like to publically pay tribute to the Belfast City Council for hosting the civic reception, for those who were there it was an enjoyable night, for those who weren't there, perhaps the next time you are back we will switch people about. I would like to pay tribute to Belfast City Council for that .

It is not always good to finish on a sad note but perhaps in many respects it demonstrates the need for trade unions, the need for safe working conditions, the need for health and safety, and more especially in the normal process of life, that a lot of the people who are attending these Conferences, like Paddy Cardiff and stuff, who have died, and we just have heard that one of our members was killed in a fatality in Tara Mines today. I would like express our condolences as a Conference to his family and also perhaps to have one minute's silence for that poor individual and his family and for all the absent friends from the trade union movement this year.

One minute's silence.

Thank you.

Colleagues, it is the end of the Conference and I can also say that on a suggestion of the Vice President, we are bringing Afreeka back at 9.30 in the morning so that thumping in your head will give you something else, ok, thank you.

Adjournment until 9.30am on Thursday 23 June

Thursday 23 June

Equality Debate

(Motions 34-35)

(Principal EC Report reference: Section 3, Chapter 4 “Equal Access to Work, Equality at Work and Equality in Unions”)

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can we proceed so that we can begin proceedings. Would you please take your seats.

I am calling on Kay Garvey, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee to move Number 4 Report.

Kay Garvey, Chairperson of Standing Orders Committee

Good morning, Mr President, delegates. This is Standing Orders Committee Report Number 4.

Standing Orders Committee notes that motions scheduled on the agenda for Conference for yesterday have not yet been taken. In light of this, Standing Orders have decided to curtail the time available to movers, seconders and speakers to motions. Movers of motions will now be given four minutes, while seconders and speakers to motions will be allowed two minutes.

Standing Orders have received an Emergency Motion in the name of Amicus on Community Rating. Standing Orders have decided to allow this motion and it will be taken during the afternoon session of Conference today. The motion will be distributed to delegates during Conference this morning.

The motions that were due to be taken yesterday will be taken during the afternoon session of Conference today. In order to facilitate this, Standing Orders would request that movers of reports limit their contributions to seven minutes.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Ok, is that agreed. Thank you.

Calling on David Joyce to move the report on the *Impact of the Fourth Equality Programme*

David Joyce, Equality Officer, Congress

Thank you chairperson. Good morning delegates. On the day after the election of two women vice-presidents to Congress and eleven women in all to the Executive Council, I am particularly pleased to introduce the report of the Impact of the Fourth Gender Equality Programme and proposals for the fifth. I am holding it up here for those of you who don't yet have a copy.

Colleagues, these gender equality programmes go back to 1982, when the Annual Delegate Conference as it was at that time, adopted its first equality report. Three more have been adapted since then and worked on and reflect our movement's commitment to eliminate discrimination and to promote gender equality in our workplaces and within our trade unions.

When we speak of gender equality, I just want to highlight a couple of points about what exactly we are talking about. We are talking about equal rights responsibilities and opportunities for women and men. This is not just a women's issue but crucially concerns men also. It doesn't mean that we will become the same but that our rights, responsibilities, opportunities will not depend on whether we have one or two "X" chromosomes. It does not mean the same treatment as this may lead to women being offered equality only on male terms. It means addressing changes in organisational and occupational practices, culture, norms, value systems etc., often designed by men. It means systematically identifying and understanding the role and needs of men and women in a given socio-economic context. And developing and implementing specific measures and organisational arrangements for the promotion of gender equality and identifying how to incorporate gender concerns into our mainstream activities. And finally taking positive action where needed, to eliminate the consequences of past discrimination.

Delegates, the report outlines the work of Congress and affiliated unions in the promotion of gender equality from 1999 to 2004. A number of thematic areas were identified in 1999, including childcare, reconciling work and family life, the gender pay gap, equality opportunities for women, women in trade unions and importantly, monitoring and evaluating our efforts to promote gender equality. I don't intend to go through in any great detail the contents of the report which I hope you will read and find useful in terms of providing a snap shot of where we are on the island, north and south in relation to gender equality and to identify some of the challenges clearly that we still face.

Very briefly, and I know this will come up later in the agenda I'll be very brief on it, the lack of accessible, affordable childcare is still a primary concern for working parents, north and south. And women take a disproportionate share of caring responsibilities so this is a serious barrier to equality at work. We have had progress, both north and south, in the provision of extra places but if this is going to be high quality child centred care where childcare workers are well paid, parents on average wages will struggle to meet the cost and so the tax system is an obvious way of helping people meet that cost. Those on lower incomes outside of the tax net clearly will need support through other channels, such as social welfare payments. We have a lot to do in this area and it is outlined in great detail in the Care document which you will receive in the packs today. We are talking about a multi-annual investment programme to deliver an additional 100,000 child care places over the next three years as part of an integrated national care initiative.

Clearly all of this is linked to reconciling work and family life and work life balance arrangements are key to achieving gender equality. They can help women to continue working who otherwise might leave because of care demands. They facilitate men to take a greater role in family responsibilities, something that research in Trinity College in Dublin has shown that they clearly want to do. Unfortunately, that same research finds negative attitudes to those who take up part-time, job-sharing options, especially men, illustrating the need for the cultural change I talked about earlier.

Delegates, employers seem to lack conviction in embracing these work life balance options that we have clearly outlined in so many publications these days. So we need to consider a role for legislating and providing rights in this area. Unfortunately, employers and Government have not so enthusiastically embraced statutory leave arrangements and improvements in that area either. Yes, we have got real gains in terms of maternity leave, although problems remain in that area, in parental leave which crucially, of course, is not paid and shamefully no statutory paternity leave at all. These initiatives while the improvements are welcome, reflect a limited response to the needs of those seeking to combine work and caring responsibilities and don't address the low take up or small number of men availing of parental leave.

In terms of atypical work, 80% of those employed part time are women, reflecting pragmatic resolutions to some of the issues addressed in the report. Congress and affiliate unions have worked to ensure that part time workers, fixed term workers, agency workers may not be treated less favourably than comparable full time workers.

Flexible working arrangements are desirable in terms of enabling employees to remain in work and we must continue to recruit and organise atypical workers and to negotiate agreements on their behalf.

The gender pay gap in the report outlines Congress and trade union work in general in tackling this persistent problem. Differences between men and women's experience of the labour market clearly explain much of the reasons for the gap and the issues to address are very, very clear.

I want to particularly acknowledge the work of Mags O'Brien and the Gender Pay Gap Project from 2001 to 2004. The toolkit which resulted from that project has proved very popular, not only amongst our own trade unions here in Ireland but also among unions throughout the European Community and indeed some employers' bodies also.

In terms of promoting equal opportunities between women and men, we have had legislative developments in the Republic in terms of the Equality Act. In Northern Ireland section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act is a comprehensive equality tool and we have participated in national initiatives to promote equal opportunities such as the National Women's Strategy – the development of that in the Republic, the Gender Equality Strategy in Northern Ireland and through our input to National Employment Action Plans, and the Equal Opportunities Framework Committee at the level of the enterprise.

The final theme then was Women in Trade Unions. Women now make up 45% of our total membership and until yesterday were represented by only five women on the Executive Council. That was 16% of places. The rule change adopted at the Special Delegate Conference last year was a very significant development and has doubled that representation. The Model Equality Clause which you will find at the back of the report that we are speaking to now, is also an important tool in terms of developing this issue.

Delegates, clearly while progress has been made, much remains to be done. 10 years after global recognition was given to the necessity to achieve gender equality around the globe, to ensure the full development of every nation much remains on our agenda. Women increasingly are an important part of the workforce, the employment rate in the Republic of Ireland for women has risen by over 14% over a ten year period, but it has shown signs of stagnating recently because of some of the problems I outlined. Women are over represented in low pay part time and A-typical work and experience more vulnerability. They continue to experience significant levels of discrimination including sexual harassment and pregnancy related discrimination. Older women are very unrepresented in the workforce. Women continue to be disadvantaged by lack of care infrastructure and 54% of women with children in the age 0-5 participate in the labour force only. There is no payment for parental leave, no paternity leave, women continue to earn almost a fifth less than men, which is above the EU average and this increases when pensions and other occupational benefits are included.

Colleagues, migrant women is a theme which we have identified as something that needs addressing in the future. And they are a particularly vulnerable group, both North and South. I want to briefly identify a particular group of migrant women who are particularly vulnerable and that is women working in domestic work – migrant women working in domestic work. A Migrant Rights Centre Ireland report last year reported terrible experiences for these women including very long hours, demeaning tasks etc. And SIPTU, other unions and Congress have been very active in ensuring improved working conditions, recognition of domestic work and support for these migrant women.

Women are more at risk of poverty. The proportion in the Republic is highest in the EU. Women face domestic violence. In terms of pensions, the largest group of people at risk of poverty is older women with inadequate pension coverage.

Delegates, we still face a major challenge in relation to women in trade unions. We need to involve and retain women in our structures and this has a knock on effect in terms of the number of women who make their way up through the ranks and the lack of women in senior roles leads to the lack of women nominations for posts. This is an underlying problem that still needs to be addressed, despite the developments yesterday.

I want to finish off by bringing to your attention a project called the LIFT Project which is a project to increase the institutional understanding of the barriers women face in terms of engaging and participating in our unions and to develop a core of women in unions equipped with the experience and knowledge to undertake senior officer and executive leadership roles. You will see this leaflet outside and it may be in your packs also. I want to acknowledge the work of Sally Anne Kinahan and Frank Vaughan in bringing the proposal to fruition and Catherine Byrne who has agreed to chair the Steering Group.

Delegates, we have identified a huge agenda for change and the back of the report suggests a process in terms of developing an Action Plan to address key themes addressed at the back. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you David. First speaker to the report.

Maria Morgan, NIPSA

Conference, President, brothers and sisters, Maria Morgan of NIPSA and ICTU Women's Committee supporting the report of Impact of the Fourth Equality Programme.

Conference, this evaluation demonstrates that progress has undoubtedly has been made in terms of the priorities identified by affiliates that have been included in the Fourth Equality Programme. However, we also need to recognise that there are gaps that must be addressed in the Fifth Programme. Utilising the National Women's Strategy and the Government's Gender Equality Strategy, it is important to understand the patterns of inequality experienced by women and their unequal position in the workforce and society.

More emphasis needs to be placed on the economic and social position of women and men and this could include examinations of the divisions of the labour within the home and there is inadequate scrutiny of the factors that prevent women from competing equally with men in areas of employment and public life due to domestic responsibility. Reconciling work and family life and aiming to ensure the delivery of better, more flexible workplace arrangements that facilitate both women and men in balancing work and family responsibilities will aid this objective.

Other aims will need to include, and the mover has mentioned some of these, addressing the lack of choice experienced by women due to the cost of childcare.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleague, we are just having trouble with the light. The green is not working so I may have to indicate to you just until we get it fixed. Sorry about that – go ahead.

Maria Morgan, NIPSA

Other aims will need to include addressing the lack of choice experience by women due to the cost of childcare. Many women cannot consider working full time outside of the home. There is also the difficulty with our community care policy which continues to assume that women will care for dependents and therefore inadequate resourcing of community care often means that women have no real choice and unless this is looked at it will continue to present barriers to employment.

Any future programme needs to pledge greater regard to section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and build on progress via a fifth programme that will include new priority areas such as women migrant workers, ensuring that the experience of migrant workers in Ireland is a positive one. There must be regard also to women in the TU movement, trade union movement and their place within its structures.

Conference, for these reasons and many more there is the need to adopt the proposal of the Firth Equality Programme that can be developed by the ICTU Women's Committees, allowing redress of the inequality that is prevalent across this island. This can be then detailed and brought to the Executive Council ensuring that progress within the trade union movement on tackling discrimination and promoting equality issues remains priority, high on the agenda of all our unions.

Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Sorry to speakers, the green light is not working so you take your time for me to stop speaking.

Pamela Dooley, UNISON

President, delegates, Pamela Dooley, UNISON and speaking on behalf of the ICTU Women's Committee on the Report of the Impact of the Fourth Equality Programme. The evaluation shows that some progress should be made on the priorities identified by affiliates and included in the Fourth Equality Programme but much more needs to be done. One of the priorities was to encourage and improve the level of participation of women at all levels of the trade union movement. What support are we giving women coming forward as activists? Our union runs a Pathways course for women. This enables women to understand our structures, be supported and encouraged to take up branch core posts and provide a networking system with other women across branches. This will help to build our next generation of activists. A similar programme needs to be put in place across our movement. Where are the women Regional Secretaries. I only know of one and where are the women in senior posts within the trade union movement? They are still few and far between.

This morning they mentioned a programme that they have just put in place. What has that not been put in place within the last five years? Am I going to come back in ten years time to find no women in senior posts like there is today? We also need to include a number of new identified priorities into the Fifth Equality Programme, such as women migrant workers and women in pensions. Again it is the women who loose out and run the risk of spending their last years in poverty.

We would recommend that Conference adopt the proposal for the Fifth Equality Programme and agree that the Women's Committee develop the detail of this and bring it to the Executive Council for approval in early Autumn.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker.

Una Murphy, NUJ

Colleagues, Una Murphy, NUJ, National Union of Journalists and ICTU Women's Committee. There is a saying up here – it is called parity of esteem and sometimes I feel there isn't adequate parity of esteem given to the men and women who work within the trade unions and also within the workplace. I think we should be working now very definitely to try to make a change in this.

The Equality Report is the way in which we should be going forward but sometimes the journalist in me will take over and put the Equality Report to the side and ask our full time officials in a 30 second soundbite – that's 90 words - what exactly are we doing right now? I think these need to be answered by this Conference. Basically it is as easy as voting in Northern Ireland in my belief. It is as easy as 1,2,3. What we need now is to gender audit all our policies to make sure that we, as the leading civic organisation in Ireland, we must take the lead on the equality issue. We must promote Work Life Balance and end the marginalisation of all workers with caring responsibilities.

So where do we go now? We need to recruit more women activists. We need more programmes like the Women into Leadership programme currently run by the ICTU and we need to develop the Fifth Equality Programme through the Women's Committees, North and South, because after all colleagues, we are at the coalface and we know where inequality lies and what to do about it. So I would like to support this report.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any more speaking to the report? Ok, I now move to Motion 34 and I call on Peter McLoone to move the motion on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Thanks very much President. This motion forges the opportunity to measure the progress since we adopted a motion in Tralee two years ago and to approve an approach that should lead to a positive outcome to achieving greater representation across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation. At the Special Delegate Conference that we held in September 2004, the delegates

approved the Model Equality Clause which is designed to commit each affiliate to the promotion of equality within your union's employment practices. And also the promotion of equality in relation to access to and membership of all your union's internal structures through a set of measures that are repeated in the text of the motion that is now before you.

Progress towards equality in a consistent manner across unions is a slow and at times torturous process. It is also frustrating because when you talk to unions everybody desires and would embrace greater participation by women, by persons with disabilities, by persons from the travelling community, older people, ethnic minorities, indeed all groups covered by the nine grounds. And when you look at the structures of the unions and the policies there are no obvious visible impediments and yet we are just not translating good policy into good practice.

The approach by the Working Group and in this motion which has been endorsed by the Executive Council of Congress, has a number of elements.

First of all we are asking each of you, the affiliates of Congress, to formally adopt the Equality Clause which is now a requirement in terms of our commitment to provide equality into the future. Ideally we would want the Equality Clause to be included in your constitution and rule book but at a minimum, we expect each affiliate will adopt the Clause as policy at your annual or biennial Conference.

Secondly, we want your full cooperation and participation in the audit process. This will allow us to take a snap shot of the extent to which we have progressed, initially by looking at the gender issue in 2005 and thereafter to measure where we are making progress to generate and cultivate a better gender balance, particularly at the highest levels of the trade union movement. In order to achieve the maximum cooperation and participation we will be approaching a number of unions to pilot the audit process and ensure there are no obstacles to obtaining the maximum response. As the motion suggests it is our intention to concentrate exclusively on the gender issue over the next two years as we have some hope of getting the information that will make this part of the overall project successful.

Finally, we want to complete the development of the audit processes between now and 2007, to include all nine grounds and I can indicate, President, that we have no difficulty with the amendment that is being proposed. Turning the theory into practical action will be a major challenge and before you decide, or the Executive Council decides, to refer this back to a small working group, let me tell you from the experience of the last two years, this simply will not work in isolation. The extension of the audit process to cover the entire nine grounds will require one or two unions, at least, to volunteer to take this task on and deliver the process that will finally enable us to demonstrate by evidence-based research that this work can actually be done. I call on you not just to support the motion but to adopt the audit process. If we do not get 100% confirmation that

the Equality Clause has been adopted by your Conferences, and into your rule books, then the rest of the audit process is a waste of time because if you cannot get a 100% response to that one step, then we won't do the rest of the work. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Sorry, are you seconding it? You will be speaking to the amended report or the amended motion, ok.

Rhona McSweeney, PSEU

President, delegates, Rhona McSweeney, PSEU and Chair of the Women's Committee and I want to second this motion 34.

In the last few years our workplace has changed dramatically. There are very many more women at work, a lot more people with disabilities are integrated into the workplace and as we have heard from Tuesday's debate we have a lot more migrant workers so workplaces have had to change to manage this diversity. In the last few years Congress and the individual unions have been very active in the equality area. Thankfully because of equality legislation, both North and South, and the EU equality directives we have been very successful in tackling many areas of discrimination. We have promoted equal opportunities, interculturalism and we have increased our commitment to the disability agenda, as you would have from David talking earlier. We primarily done this through the social partnership and I think it culminated in the equality framework under *Sustaining Progress* which acknowledges that equality is a key goal which must underpin activity in all policy areas in order to ensure a fair and inclusive society with equal opportunities.

However, delegates it is not enough that we talk the talk. It is important for us to walk the walk and this is why the Model Equality Clause and the audit process is absolutely important, because it means that not only are we proposing equality in the workplaces etc., but we consider equality essential and a core part of our business and our procedures and by adopting this particular motion we will be showing to the nation and workers that in fact equality is fundamental to the trade union movement.

We have heard talk about the Fourth Equality Programme and while a lot has been done, much more needs to be done. David mentioned Mags O'Brien and the Gender Pay Gap. In a survey Mags undertook she identified the fact that women are grossly underrepresented in the trade union movement. As David said, we are 45% of the membership and yet at the last Executive there was only

16% representation at senior level. We are delighted with the change of rule that has brought eleven women on board and two vice-presidents and the Women's Committee wishes the incoming Executive Committee, and the women in particular the very best for their work over the next two years.

Equally we are very happy to welcome the LIFT Project and we feel that this will be very active in promoting the development and progression of women through the unions. We feel the audit process is absolutely important. It is not something we are used to dealing with particularly in the South, though I know our Northern brothers and sisters have much more practice of this because of section 75. However, we feel that it is very important because not only will the audit process show us what happens but as Peter said as a snap shot, it will show, it will give us a change to see how successful we have been in some areas and it will also identify those areas where we need more work.

Delegates I urge you all to support this motion so that we can give a clear signal to everyone in this island that the trade union movement not only preaches equality but that we practice it too. Thank you very much delegates.

Amanda Allaway, NIPSA

President, delegates, Amanda Allaway, NIPSA to move the amendment to motion 34. Conference, the Model Equality Clause and the audit process outlined in this motion will undoubtedly assist affiliates to pursue the equality agenda and focus and develop their internal structures and services to their member, it is also ensuring that Congress can deliver support and service to its affiliates North and South on a fair and equal basis. This can only encourage better participation and in turn a stronger trade union movement. And why do we need to do this?

Well I want to focus on just two areas mentioned in the motion. First of all, on age. As a former chairperson of the Northern Youth Committee some eight or nine years ago, I was glad to see a delegate here on Tuesday morning fighting the corner for the youth wing of the movement. However, I was equally disappointed that if you look at the Executive report that the Northern Youth Committee, like some other committees, is not even mentioned. Are there no young people in the North? Why are affiliates not putting young members forward. We need to know. This is why the audit process is critical. In terms of gender, Frances O'Grady talked about the British trade union movement being slow and not wanting to rush things when it came to women. Equally we don't want to make the same mistake.

Conference we have a strategy. We need to take it forward. This amendment is simply to bring that timetable forward. Focussing on gender over the next three years would have meant that it would have been 2009 before we were back to

discussing the outcomes of that audit process and that simply is too long. So I am therefore grateful that the Executive Committee has accepted this amendment and I hope Conference that you will too. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Are you speaking to the motion? Go ahead.

Catherine Byrne, INTO

Thank you President, Catherine Byrne, INTO and member of the Executive Council speaking on support of the motion on behalf of the Executive Council. Just wanting maybe to link this discussion, this debate, with a debate we had yesterday in relation, or the day before yesterday, in relation to recruitment and organisation and also linking to the whole area of caring which is going to be part of a debate this afternoon, and I am speaking in particular with reference to section 3 of the audit process, which talks about providing a range of Work Life Balance policies to attract and retain those with caring responsibilities, or those with a disability which prevents them from working full time. I think one of the real challenges for the movement in the next number of years is not only to attract new people into the organisation, the best talent we can get, but it will also be to retain those that have contributed and that have talent. Because all of us who are in this hall today, either as activists or as full time officials, realise that the long hours, that the high demands that are made in order to provide a good service are at a high cost. And issues like job sharing, part time work, reduced working hours, term time – these issues must be debated and discussed now within unions if they haven't already happened. This motion gives us a structure and a framework within which to take stock to sand back and to create fit organisations for the future so that we can face the challenges ahead. Flexible organisations with the best talent available, diverse and effective in our workforce. I urge you to support the motion. Thank you.

Billy Halligan, PSEU

President, Billy Halligan, PSEU speaking in support of the resolution. But just, President, wanting to sound a note of caution. Not in relation to what's set out in the motion but in the practical difficulties that we are going to encounter and that the Executive Council is going to encounter in trying to develop a full audit process. And I am thinking in terms of what this resolution asks us to do is to develop a process which will allow us to monitor in respect of our own employees, their gender, their marital status, their family status, their sexual orientation, their religious beliefs, their political opinion, their age, their disability, race or ethnic origin. I can assure Conference that in respect of our own staff

and in respect of our own lay representatives, there is going to be difficulty in getting cooperation from people providing that information because they are going to ask us, why do you want it? And they are going to say that I don't believe that my family status influences my ability to be a Branch Secretary, I don't believe that my sexual orientation influences my ability to be Branch Secretary and those issues are going to be raised with us by our own staff and don't forget, in respect of presumably many unions, we are small employers and the numbers of employ are quite small and people are going to be concerned that personal information concerning them could identify them and they may not want that. So it is easy to adopt the resolution, it is easy to pass the resolution but I would caution the Executive Council and I would caution Peter and his colleagues in trying to proceed with the full audit that those issues are going to be raised with us by staff and raised with us by our lay representatives. So having said that Chair, I support the resolution.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Patricia.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON

Patricia McKeown, UNISON to support the motion. Eleven women on the Executive Committee, yes and it has only taken 25 years. I say congratulations to all of those women and congratulations affiliates for delivering on it. And there is a very, very long way to go. But there is only a point in having increased women's representation at senior levels of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions if it delivers to the women we represent on a daily basis and whose condition is not the same as ours. We are very lucky in the Western world and we are going to have to wake up because the condition of the majority of women on this planet is to live in poverty, to live with abuse, with humiliation and to die young. There are also problems for women across this island and the test for me is what the UN Committee says about both the Irish and the British Governments – they have failed to eliminate discrimination. We have a genuine opportunity to do it now. I think we have got to say not another 25 years before we see significant change in this movement but today.

There may be among our ranks those who will, as the last speaker said, be worried or afraid because they are going to be audited. But that will be because they haven't yet grasped what we mean by promoting equality of opportunity so we take that fear away by engaging them in this process. They are the people who work for this movement, they are the people whose mission it is to promote equality of opportunity, they have got to understand. If they don't understand then we won't move forward. My union has over a thousand people in its

workforce. We audit, we audit with no difficulty whatsoever because the mission is clear. We have got to understand the promoting of equality and we have to start in our own back yard and congratulations Congress, we have started.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Colleagues, we are having a bit of trouble over the lights and things which are now back on stream so we will be back into ensuring that we stick rigidly to the timetable. There was a bit of confusion there early on and we were giving people the benefit of doubt along those lines, ok.

Can I put Motion 34, as amended, to the Conference. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Passed.

Moving along to Motion 35, calling on David Joyce, Equality Officer to move the report.

David Joyce, Congress Equality Officer

Good morning once again delegates. I want to introduce to you a couple of documents. One is a report on the Congress Equality Programme for People with Disabilities 2001-2005 and Strategic Targets identified for the next four years, and this one, the A4 one is a Code of Practice for Trade Unions on Disability Issues.

I want to just very briefly highlight some of the major themes and issues contained in the reports and to talk about the importance of the Code of Practice also. The report, as the previous one indeed, is an account of the progress, significant in some areas, disappointing in others, in terms of our efforts to promote equality for people with disability at work and within our trade unions also.

Delegates, equality at work is a founding principle of our movement and one which cannot be determined by whether a person has a disability or not. The report is a testament to our efforts to put that principle into action and tracks progress in relation to a range of commitments that we secured in social partnership and in the promotion of equality within trade unions. There have been some major legislative developments in the area since the previous report was introduced. The Equality Act in the Republic introduced some changes in the disability area including a requirement on employers to take appropriate measures to enable people with disabilities to access employment training and opportunities to advance, and they may only refuse to provide these reasonable accommodations on the basis that they put a disproportionate burden on their business. That is a significant improvement on what was previously referred to

as “nominal cost”. We have commissioned research on the whole aspect of reasonable accommodation and have had training for unions and indeed produced a booklet to the trade unions to take the issues of disability forward. Other changes included where actuarial evidence suggested increase costs discrimination on the basis of disability was previously allowed, it is now excluded. The rate for remuneration for people with disability is not allowed to be below the minimum wage and the burden of proof has shifted to the respondent to prove that discrimination did not occur.

Colleagues, over 10% of the case files of the Equality Authority in the Republic referred to discrimination on the grounds of disability. And mainly they refer to a failure on behalf of employers to provide that reasonable accommodation. We have also had the introduction of a Disability Bill in the Republic and this has been a controversial discussion. It is new territory for all of us. It is an attempt at accommodating a significant minority in our community and while it isn't a perfect bill and we have done a detailed submission which outlines our concerns in relation to it, it is a place now to start. So let's work with it, try and build the public services to provide the necessary services to enable people with disability to participate in our society and work with that as best we can.

Other areas I just want to briefly touch upon are; there was a Code of Practice in relation to sheltered occupational services. The Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment has shown considerable reluctance to engage since this was agreed in social partnership under the PPF and proposals for full time employment support scheme have been poorly received also.

I want to acknowledge Paula Carey's work on the National Disability Authority. I want to acknowledge also the work of the Workway Project which was a fabulous project and a team of Mairead, Elaine, Martha and Siobhan and they produced lots of materials in terms of developing awareness and addressing barriers to increasing employment opportunities for people with disability in the private sector. I would encourage any of you in the private sector interested in progressing employment participation for people with disability to visit their website and use the tools that project has created.

We have had issues around the benefits trap in terms of people moving from being in receipt of benefit into employment and finding that they are worse off and these are issues that seriously need to be addressed also.

I want briefly to also touch upon the issue of Blindcraft. Blindcraft is one of the few institutions in the Republic that has provided the dignity of work for blind people in Ireland since 1957. It has been threatened with closure as part of health care reforms and SIPTU is now working with the Minister for Health to examine all of the options, and I am sure that on behalf of all of Conference, you will agree that we wish them luck in that exercise and hope that Blindcraft can remain and that those people can continue to work in dignity.

We have done work in the cost of disability payment. We have sought resources in terms of the proposed national system of needs assessment arising from the Disability Bill to offset the extra cost of disability. We will continue to press FAS for their new strategy and vocational training promised for this summer but yet to be delivered.

I want to acknowledge the work of both Disability Committees, North and South and to pay tribute to the work of the members and the Chairs of both committees – Brendan Conway in the Republic and Max O'Brien here in the North. Both committees have been anxious to progress work in the Code of Practice for Trade Unions and we are delighted to be able to present to Conference today a code based on legislation in the South which will also be adopted for use in Northern Ireland. Delegates, this is a crucial tool for the movement in terms of working to ensure that the voice of people with disabilities is heard loud and clear within our unions and challenges us all to live up to our responsibilities.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

David, can you wind up.

David Joyce, Congress Equality Officer

Colleagues, statistics show that the participation rates for people with disabilities in employment is very low and those gaps need to be addressed, so I urge you to adopt the report and the code and to bring it back to your unions and work on it in a systematic and planned approach. Thank you.

Max O'Brien, Congress Chair Disability Committee (N Ireland)

Chair, Max O'Brien, Chair of Northern Ireland Disability Committee. First of all, to thank you, President, for the opportunity to address Conference.

I wish to acknowledge first of all and thank all those (tape ends, piece missing)who are working on policies for people with a disability to do more in the future months ahead. The opportunity arises now because, and I was just saying to David, there is a Code of Practice that the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland have just issued and there is 200 pages in it, 200, there is enough in it to choke a pig. There is a summary which, I think, is 199 pages but the main thing is for unions to get this code. It will sit alongside the booklet that has been referred to by David but this can be used in tribunals and so on when you would take cases.

If your union has not held any special training up till now for staff and shop stewards, the Disability Committee in Northern Ireland will do that for you. So we would also appeal to affiliates who are not represented on the Disability Committee, therefore it doesn't refer to NIPSA, T&G, Belfast Trade Union Council, AUT, UTU, Amicus, NUJ and TSSA, and we would ask you to support the Disability Committee by nominating someone to it.

Finally Chair, to flag to all the NIC affiliates that later this year there is going to be a launch of updated guidelines for Shop Stewards and accredited representatives entitled 'Addressing Disability in the Workplace'. This is an exciting project that we have been working on for a number of years, too many I don't want to mention, but we have secured the expertise and experience of City Bridges which you will all know about and they compiled this training document. We got generous financial support from Dell and it has also been supported by the Employers' Forum on Disability, so we have got that working relationship amongst all the groups so I would ask you that when that is launched later on this year that unions would support it.

President, thank you once again.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Max. Now I am moving to Motion 35 on behalf of the Executive. John Carr.

John Carr, Congress Executive Council

A Chairde, mindful of the increased involvement of unions in promoting negotiating and organising on disability issues, I am conscious of the inclusion of disability related issues in our national agenda, the Executive Council of Congress is proud to put this motion before you today for your consideration. As the introduction to the motion acknowledges however, there has been some progress, but unfortunately there is also grave disappointment as evidenced by the statistics contained in this report. The target of 3% employment across the public service has not been met and we only have about 7% of employees in the civil service who have disabilities. Let's face it, only a minority of employers have employees with a disability. Relatively few have made changes to the job or workplace to facilitate disabled workers and half are unaware of the grants and supports available for employing disabled workers.

Sheltered work accounts for a relatively small percentage of employment for disabled people. If we wish to accommodate the vast remainder of people with

disabilities we must be prepared to abandon the rhetoric and commit to action, and action that means demanding the rights that the people with disabilities have.

A staggering 85% of working age people with a disability or a chronic illness acquired that disability during their working lives. This underlines the importance of strategies to retain people in work after the onset of disability if we are to increase the proportion of disabled people in a job. We can do something in our workplace in relation to those who require a disability while at work. Participation in education by young people with disabilities is significantly lower than their non-disabled counterparts – about a third of those aged between 15 and 19 are currently out of the education system and bearing in mind that we are moving towards a knowledge-based society, these children will loose out when they become adults because they are now out of the education system. And in that respect I wish to acknowledge the fact that the Government has moved in the education sector by the provision of extra jobs to make sure that children with disabilities are retained and educated with their peers at local level. But it is an indictment of our society that parents have to go to court to demand their rights for their young people. We spend millions on tribunals, yet we force parents through the courts to try to retain rights for their children. That is wrong, our society is wrong and that is something within our society we must change.

In order to make a difference we must ourselves understand the needs of people with disabilities. In recent years there has been a significant shift away from the medical model of disability with its focus on impairment to a social model which seeks to establish the disability and that disability arises from the environment and the organisation of our society in general, rather than from the individual or his/her impairment. Disability therefore must be seen by us as a consequence of the social and attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent persons with disability from participating in society, or indeed participating in our own unions. So our focus must therefore be on the need to change societal attitudes and conditions to accommodate the needs of those with disability. Those with disabilities must be able to participate fully in education, in employment and leisure along with everyone else. Let's therefore continue to put disability on the centre of our own national agenda.

We now have a blueprint in the area of employment – the Workway initiative which David mentioned was prepared and developed by Congress in conjunction with IBEC and supported by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment. It represents the first social partnership initiative in this area. And there are seven strategic objectives in that report. Raise awareness of the employment potential of people with disabilities – that's our job, we can do that. Explore local employees skill availability and skill shortage, we can do that. Identify barriers and prevent the take up of employment opportunities, we can do that. Implement local solutions to barriers associated with employment take up, yes we can be part of that too. Circulate information on available schemes to assist integration,

link with existing networks, inform public policy makers and service providers of the implement for the development of employment and training services. So there is a lot we can do in relation to people with disabilities.

And I just want to, before I come to a conclusion, to mention an area which is a major difficulty and one which has been addressed in *Sustaining Progress* but still has a lot of work to do and that is in the area of the benefits trap. Currently, people with disabilities who go out to work stand to lose a significant array of benefits. Recent NDA research points out that alongside loss of the weekly welfare payment such as Disability Allowance, going to work will generally put someone over the income limit of a medical card, an entitlement to link services such as free disability aid is also forfeited. The household benefits package, free travel, mobility allowance and rent allowance could also be lost by someone entering employment. If the State were to meet the extra cost of disability without trying to help the subsistence level entrants, it would be far more financially attractive to people with disabilities to go out to work.

Congress, we will promote and support all unions to adopt both the general equality clause and the new trade union code of practice for people with disabilities to ensure that such people are recognised and treated as having equal status with all other persons within the trade union movement. All unions should work to promote equality and equal opportunities and to ensure that persons with a disability can be accommodated within our working environment in all our employment practices and indeed within our internal union practices and procedures.

Go raibh maith agut

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Call on Brendan Conway who is chair of the Disability Committee in the Republic of Ireland to second.

Brendan Conway, Chairperson of Disability Committee in Republic

Morning delegates. This is Brendan Conway, I am chair of the ICTU Liaison Disability Committee. Colleagues, as chairperson of the Disability Committee in the Republic of Ireland I urge you to strongly support this motion not just by voting for it when the chair calls for the vote in a few minutes, but by taking it back to your own unions, North and South in the public and private sectors and along with the previous motion on the promotion of equality within unions, implement them in a planned and systematic manner.

Equality at work is a human right and should not be affected by having a disability. Yet, people with disability of working age are two and a half times less likely to be at work. Access to the labour market leads to the opportunity to contribute and participate in family, community and social life. It is therefore imperative that we as a movement do all in our power to remove the factors that contribute to the exclusion from the labour market. Some of the factors that contribute to people with a disability being excluded from the world of work include the benefits trap. People with disabilities face significant costs of living, such as transport, which is totally inaccessible and basically a lot of people I know who travel to work in the civil service actually have to get taxis at €30 a day. Some of the costs are independent of work status, some may arise if someone has a job, however, in many cases official help with these costs is tied to remaining out of work, most significantly in the Republic.

Access to a medical card is restricted only to those earning an income less than the minimum wage. As far as I know it is way below the minimum wage. This must be dealt with if we are to improve labour force participation of people with disabilities.

Delegates, I myself work in the public sector. Since its introduction in 1977, the 3% employment target has never been met. Special entry competitions for people with disabilities have set some positive trends. However, as of 2002, no one who entered the civil service has advanced beyond Higher Executive Officer level. We need practical action and leadership to turn the code into reality.

Whilst Congress welcomes the legislative provision of the Disabilities Bill 2004, underpinning the 3% quota in the public service and the proposals to adopt a complex decentralisation monitoring system, Congress is concerned that this provision could potentially undermine the 3% employment target. The Goodbody report on employment and career progression of people in the civil service provides the civil service union with an opportunity to implement real improvement with Government. Colleagues, Congress will work with affiliated unions to ensure that the commitment on the 3% remains and that appropriate mechanisms are established to monitor the achievements of the targets. I am asking delegates again to support this motion and thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Brendan. Colleagues, I understand in certain circumstances that time has been cut but the reason the time has been cut is because we have a very, very long agenda and it means to say that people coming behind will be cut again. So what we are doing is taking time from ourselves, you know. So, next speaker.

Marjorie Trimble, UNISON

President, delegates, Marjorie Trimble, UNISON supporting Motion 35. The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in the field of employment and in the provision of goods and services. However, the act is weak and in reality people with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment in the health services in Ireland, both North and South. Although there are many good examples of good practices, focussing on individual cases and indeed much good work around the development of guidance, financial incentives and training, sustained practical action is required to shift outdated, attitudinal and structural barriers and move from idealism to equality of opportunity and a recognition of diversity in the workplace.

It was in this context that Unison, as part of the North South health services partnership, in partnership with Disability Action from Northern Ireland and the Disability Federation of Ireland, joined forces to organise the seminar. The key aim of the seminar was to stimulate discussion and plan action on how health services, institutions, trade unions and local communities can work together more effectively to improve the number of people with disabilities employed in the health services sector. Participants highlighted the need for 'champions for change in the workplace', particularly at senior levels, a culture of positive change needs to be developed that values disabled people's contributions and addresses equal participation. Work needs to be provided on the basis that improving access for disabled people is good for everyone. The employment of people with disabilities can no longer be seen as a matter for disability services only. Only by fostering a culture of equality and diversity will the whole system respond. I support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Marjorie. Next speaker.

Could I also Joe before you start – delegates, the last couple of days we have warned people about phones. A couple of them went off this morning. Can you please switch off your phones. It is very disconcerting for a speaker when they are up there.

Joe Roe, CPSU

Morning delegates, Joe Roe, CPSU Executive Member and disabled.

In speaking in support of Motion 35, it is imperative that ICTU continue to progress the actions as outlined in the motion, the Code of Practice for Unions, unemployment opportunities and the various methods contained in the motion are all vital in the drive to get more disabled into the workforce and subsequently into the trade union movement. That is most important, delegates, that we use this code of practice as a platform to get more disabled people employed and to become members of our affiliated unions because it is mostly through unions that disabled people can participate in the workforce. It would be remiss of me being here in Belfast not to mention the Disability Bill currently in the Seanad. The Bill should be based on rights – it is not based on rights. Like, it is totally crazy that because I am disabled I am going to be treated differently. All I am asking for is the right to a service. Under the Bill I won't even have recourse to the law in the Republic so everything will be based on assessment. The forms for assessing the assessment are not even in place yet so this could take five or six years to come in. Delegates, I am not going to waste your time, support the motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON

President, delegates, Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON speaking to the section of the report on equality and asking Congress to continue to support the introduction of a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland.

ICTU, UNISON and hundred of groups representing thousands of people have put an enormous amount of work into the Bill of Rights process over the past five years. 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 could have a positive impact on the problems we all face in our everyday lives. However, the process has stalled. The most recent report produced by the Human Rights Commission is lengthy and inaccessible. It does not exhibit consensus around key principles. Most of importantly it is not firm enough in supporting strong social and economic rights despite the majority of submissions having demonstrated their support. I call on Congress to continue to support the work of the Human Rights Consortium, a group of over 100 NGOs, trade unions and community groups, including ICTU and UNISON. The consortium has continued to work to keep the process alive. The new Human Rights Commission must act now. We demand the full inclusion of social and economic rights. We demand recognisable gains for the most

disadvantaged in our community. We demand the promotion of equality for all. The Commission must now establish a round table forum of politicians and civil society to revive the stalled process. Only then can we reach agreement on the rights and values that we wish to see carried forward into our future. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker.

Alan McCrorey, UNISON

President, delegates, Alan McCrorey, Unison speaking to the report. Conference, rights for lesbian and gay members are still not protected by the core legislation such as the Discrimination Order or the Fair Employment Act. We still call on ICTU to ensure that the new Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland includes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Politics as it exists in Northern Ireland at the moment is a collection of different laws which tell us what we cannot do against what we can. Although the new equality and human rights duties are a first good step in ensuring that the issues facing marginalised groups such as lesbian and gay men are put centre stage in Government decision making, it is not enough. Citizens, we have human rights, we demand equality and I am asking Congress to highlight the issues in its future work. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. I want to put Motion 35 to the Conference. Those in favour please show. Those against. Abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Conference, I want to adopt chapter 4, section 3 of the report. Is that agreed? Ok. I want to move on to next debate - 'Quality of Life'. Paula Carey to move the report.

Look can I move to Motion 36 on Pensions. Rosheen Callender, sorry. We have to move on here because we have earmarked for the Taoiseach come in at this time and Paula has just gone out to check on that. Go ahead Rosheen.

Thursday 23 June

Quality of Life Debate

(Motions 34-35)

(Principal EC Report reference: Section 3, Chapter 6 “Social Provision & Protection” Section 3, Chapter 7 “Health and Caring”)

Rosheen Callender, Executive Council

Thank you. Rosheen Callender, SIPTU. First of all I would like thank you all for your support in relation to the Vice Presidency and just to say how very honoured I am by it and how hard I intend to work over the next couple of years to represent the interests of all you, men and women, North and South in the public and private sector, whether in low paid unpensioned employment or whether in well paid pensionable employment, but perhaps no quality of life.

I want to move Motion 36 on behalf of the Executive Council and just to start by saying that unfortunately there are no simple straightforward solutions to the many challenges that we face, both North and South to make sure that our senior citizens now and in the future enjoy a good standard of living and quality of life, because that means going way beyond the area of pensions and ensuring the best possible standards of care, of social services, health services and other services, and a society that is elder friendly in every way.

Now, developing pensions is part only one part of that problem but it is a vitally important part and I think our policy objectives and therefore our proposed solutions which have several distinct strands, all interconnected, demand a very coherent consistent, logical long-term policy response from us. And the bones of that response are in the 2005 Briefing Paper that is in your pack – Irish Pensions: Problems and Solutions, which the Executive is asking you to endorse. But we don't pretend that this paper, the bones of it are there, but we don't pretend that this paper is fully fleshed out as yet. Indeed, we have deliberately refrained from putting flesh on some of the suggestions and proposals because so much work is ongoing and because your representatives are currently engaged in such an intensive consultation and discussion process, both with the UK Government and indeed in the South with all the key players on pensions, the Government, the employers, and the various pension professionals.

I think the main challenges we face are fairly similar in the North and South because our pension systems are fairly similar. Both rely on a particular mix of public and private provision, the State-run basic social welfare schemes supplemented by a variety of occupational and personal schemes which are

incentivised by tax relief. Traditionally our policy has been to build on that base to try and improve the system by reforming the parts of it that are no longer working well and what is now happening again, and we tend to do this every ten years or so, is a root and branch review of whether that present base is still the right one and if it is what further reforms are needed now, if it isn't is there a better system, a system that is working better anywhere else that we could perhaps adopt.

The Pensions Board in the South is currently studying and reviewing all the options and my belief is that if we are to continue building on the existing system and improving it, we face three main, broadly speaking, three main challenges. The first of course how to get the Social Insurance pensions up to decent levels, the second is how to extend supplementary pensions, however we provide them, to all the groups who actually need pensions and will depend on pensions for income on retirement, particularly the excluded and vulnerable groups like women in particular sectors like migrant workers and generally low paid workers as well. That means how do we negotiate better occupational schemes and fill the gaps by other types of provision? And the third strand of course is how do we improve the quality of existing pensions cover as well as increasing the quantity? That means defending existing schemes in both the public and private sectors, particularly the very good defined benefit schemes that we have negotiated over the years and, also, how do we get much greater contributions into the many defined contribution that we have had to accept the presence of in the last couple of decades. And because so many of the good occupational schemes that we have negotiated have been in difficulty and adversely affected by the kind of developments that are listed in the motion 36, and because it has proved very difficult to negotiate new occupational schemes in those circumstances, never mind keep up with the big growth in the workforce, I think we need to look closely at all the options at this stage and access very carefully any new ideas that are emerging. So far we have made a number of basic proposals. We have argued for example in the run up to every budget that the 34% target must be met more quickly than the Government has been moving in the South. We have argued that as long as we are relying on tax incentives to get people into occupational or supplementary schemes, that those incentives must be redirected to low paid workers as well as to our many members who pay tax at the 42% rate. A tax credit which could be made refundable to people below the tax threshold might be effective in increasing coverage if it was marketed properly and if people understood it in the way that they understood the SSIsAs for example.

We have also looked at further possible changes. The merits of introducing a State Annuity Scheme, for example, which we put a lot of emphasis on in our present talks and other ideas like the introduction of possible hybrid schemes, a kind of a cross between defined benefit and defined contribution whereby the risk is more equally shared, and we are looking very closely at that. The Dutch schemes, funds, are discussing that very actively at the moment and we should

be as well. We haven't been so keen on ideas that seem to be failing elsewhere like the idea of pension protection fund which has been introduced recently in the UK despite the bad experience in the States of that. But on the other hand, I think, the UK is ahead of us in the South in advancing the idea of mandatory consultation with workers about changes in occupational schemes. We are only at the early stages of that with the *Sustaining Progress* committee just starting its work on that.

So in conclusion of course I would like to encourage you to support this motion and to read carefully the document on pensions because there are a lot of ideas in there, I think, and if we keep our main objectives on pensions to the forefront I think we will be able to retain and improve the system and fine tune it to the present difficulties and the many future shocks we might have in the pensions area. Thank you, delegates.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Is there a formal seconder to Motion 36? Formally seconded. Can we have the mover of 37 please?

Breda Craig, GPMU

Breda Craig, Graphical and Media Print Union moving the motion. Executive Council, delegates, a Conference policy document was published earlier this year and the Irish Government ran a National Pensions Awareness Campaign some weeks back, but to date the debate on pensions is largely centred on the issue of the level of occupational pension coverage among Irish workers and the need the massively improve that coverage. However, relatively little discussion or indeed policy has been given over to, what is for many thousands of workers an even bigger and more immediate crisis, that of long standing and good quality of defined benefit pensions schemes facing imminent closure because of under-funding difficulties. One such pension is the Irish Master Printers Association of the IMPA, a provincial newspaper and printing industry final salary pension, which covers approximately 500 workers in almost 50 provincial newspapers and printing companies in the Irish Republic. The employers' organisation, the INPA has already signalled its intention to the GPM to wind up this pension scheme by 31 December this year. The scheme has been in existence since 1969 and it is funded on a joint basis by the individual contributions of the scheme's members and their employers as part and parcel of the industry wide employer/union agreement on pay, conditions, work practices and new technology. It survived the oil shocks and three day weeks of the 1970's and the near bankrupt and unemployment ridden Irish economy of the 70's. It is a defined benefit final

salary pension that delivers a two thirds industrial basic rate salary on retirement at 65, with a death in service element and a 50% survivor's pension in the event of death of a member after his/her retirement. Therefore, closure of this pension or its replacement with defined contribution of PRSA type arrangement would quite obviously represent a dramatic worsening or a reduction in the terms and conditions of employment of all our members in the first instance.

And secondly, at a time when there is a national awareness campaign to improve pension coverage among workers and moves to close this particular pension scheme would fly in the face of what is supposedly, not only Government but also Congress policy of dramatically improving occupational pensions and pension coverage for the country's workers. Our discussions to date with employers have produced very little other than an indication from them that they might fund the shortfall in the scheme before its closure at the end of the year and subsequently facilitate the introduction on a company-by-company basis of individual defined contribution pensions for their employees, our members. The industry employers have repeatedly recited that they are exposed to the risk of having to make good any funding shortfalls in the scheme because of under-performing pension investment. What they will not draw attention to is their abject refusal, particularly since the introduction of pension legislation to launch PRSAs, to allow new employers to exit occupational defined benefit schemes. This is a calculated and greed fuelled tactic on the part of the employers at a time when unprecedented revenue and multi million euro profit growth industry and is effectively cash starving the pension fund and is very probably the single biggest contribution factor of the current funding difficulties of the IMPA's pension scheme.

Mr President, it is all too easy to talk the talk with the media present here at Conference this week to hide behind reports, adopt policy statements, talk of new approaches and initiatives on pensions and current crises they face. It is however, quite another matter altogether to have guts and character to stand up and to fight to defend and preserve hard won existing good quality final salary pension schemes. Please support this motion. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Seconder? Seconded.

Des Fagan, NUJ

President, Conference, Des Fagan, National Union of Journalists seconding this motion. I would like to offer the support of the National Union of Journalists to our colleagues in the GPMU. Conference, our members in the NUJ also work in the regional newspaper sector. We are fortunate, however, in that we have a defined benefit pension scheme that is in a health state for the moment. We

must be probably the only ones at this stage but. We know that the employers probably want to target this because they are afraid of their liabilities. At the moment they don't have any. I am glad to note the activities of Congress in this area as outlined by Rosheen from the rostrum earlier, but I think we all know that attacks on defined benefit pension schemes are attacks on pay and conditions of employment and they have taken money out of peoples' pockets when they try to curtail these schemes or close them off. Such an attack on the defined benefit scheme in the regional newspaper sector is further aggravated when you consider that this particular newspaper sector and the newspaper owners in this sector are securing huge profits from their business, this is reflected in the sale prices that we read about, we have read about it this week, but we read about it every week, tens of millions of euro and hundreds of millions of euro are changing hands for these titles so when the employers say they can't afford to meet their liabilities, that is just not on. They have the money and they can meet their liabilities. So I would ask you to please support Motion 37. Thank you.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Thank you Des. Apologies Des, you were under attack there from the mikes for a while. Could I have the mover of Motion 38 please.

Sorry Gerry, we might leave this just for a moment.

Delegates could I ask you to formally welcome the Taoiseach.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Congress, can we once again welcome the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern to our Conference here in Belfast. I want to hand over to David Begg now.

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

Taoiseach, just on behalf of Conference just to give you a very warm welcome again. It is a tradition now of some standing that you come to visit and you are always extremely welcome and we are very conscious of the honour that you do us by coming here. I understand from the media that you have some interesting things to say to us this morning, so we are listening very attentively to that. Can I thank you for the many courtesies that you have extended to my colleagues and I in the course of the last two years. On many occasions that we have had to come and make representations to you - and I have a long list of things of course that I have to whisper in your ear as well when we are leading you to the door - but in the nature of things you have always been very receptive and always been very helpful to us and we appreciate that very much. Conference this week has been reflecting I think on the quality of work and the quality of life and it is a fitting enough theme I think for some of the subjects you are going to discuss with us this morning, particularly in relation to the housing issue because that is very much of course concerned with the quality of life and our hope is that if we can successfully crack some very large social problem like that that, we would be able to move on to crack other problems in the right framework.

I want to also acknowledge the presence of Mr Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General to the Taoiseach who has worked very closely with us and is our main interlocutor with Government and he has treated us always with great courtesy in any of our dealings with the department. So Taoiseach, once again on behalf of Conference it is a great pleasure to have you here with us today.

Thursday 23 June, 2005

Keynote Address

An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern

11.00am

Bertie Ahern, Taoiseach

Thank you very much, David, General Secretary and to Brendan Mackin, your President and Peter McLoone, the Vice President, to all of you the delegates to this ICTU Biennial Conference. And again to thank you for the opportunity and the invitation to with you once again in the Waterfront Hall – this beautiful hall in Belfast, and my last visit here on 8 December wasn't too successful, but anyway keep on trying and my previous visit was to see West Life – that was a better affair but anyway, I hadn't got to do anything. But anyway, third time here we go again. But it is an honour and I want to thank you for the honour to address you in Belfast. I have always over a long political career, a close association with the Congress of Trade Unions and it has always been a great pleasure and an honour and a responsibility to work closely with you and I thank you all for that.

It is appropriate that I should begin by acknowledging and paying tribute to the role of Congress as the largest civil society organisation on the island, representing well over three-quarters of a million working people north and south every day of the year, year after year – almost one-third of them here in Northern Ireland.

I congratulate you, President, on the completion of a very successful term of office. I wish the incoming President, Peter McLoone, every success in ongoing and everyday demanding responsibilities.

Those of you who live and work in the North, and those of us who visit here regularly, know how times have changed. We only have to look around us here in Belfast to see the new developments and the growing progress and prosperity. The city is being transformed. The fruits of peace are there to be seen, in all aspects of life.

We cannot of course, however, be complacent. We cannot settle for an imperfect peace. We cannot be blind to the continued tension, fear and intimidation that still blight the lives of many people in communities across this city and across the North. We cannot ignore the need to address the deep-rooted problems in society. We cannot – and I will not – rest until we see the completion of the

process of transformation that was set in train by the Good Friday Agreement over seven years ago.

Change may not always happen as quickly as we would like. But enormous changes for the better have come. And those changes cannot be reversed now. There can be no going back to the failures – the political and economic failures of the past.

I do not wish to speculate here on what might be said or done in the next few weeks. All I will say is that the policy of the Irish Government – and the British Government – is clear. We need to see an end to all paramilitary and criminal activity and the completion of decommissioning. It has to be clear and decisive. If that happens, we will expect unionists to participate in genuine partnership politics.

I know that trust has been damaged over this past while and that will take time to rebuild as it always does. However, we must not deviate from the agreed destination. That destination is the full operation of partnership politics, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement. Nothing less will work. Nothing less will last. Nothing less will provide a basis on which unionists and nationalists of all persuasions can live and work together into the long term future. And of course I believe only partnership politics that empowers and liberates all communities, provides a viable and acceptable way forward here in Northern Ireland.

In the weeks ahead, Northern Ireland will again experience the challenges and difficulties of the marching season. And as always the vast majority of parades will pass off peacefully and without incident. A small number may prove to be contentious. I would ask that, while each side will have different perspectives on the rights and wrongs of such parades, those with influence on both sides use it for the good of their communities, by easing tensions and avoiding conflict.

That influence has proved very effective in the past, particularly last year and in recent years, despite some volatile local incidents as we had last year, successive marching seasons have been broadly peaceful because of the hard work and good intentions of leaders and community workers on both sides and I very much want to thank them while I am here in the North, the entirely peaceful parade in Rosstown, Co. Donegal each year, and the good work that is being done in developing the Boyne battle site, demonstrate that it is possible to celebrate the Orange tradition in a way that threatens and offends nobody.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming desire of all the citizens on this island is for peace and normality in their daily lives. The longstanding commitment of the trade union movement to this end continues to be an enormously significant and valuable one and today I want to thank you for that, because you represent members of all political ideologies and none; members of all religious denominations and none.

As an all-island body, Congress has time and again, even in the most difficult, blackest and darkest times, shown its ability to mobilise community opinion against sectarianism and prejudice. I am not alone in saying that your efforts in this area are deeply appreciated, President. I do not forget the contribution of Congress in supporting the Good Friday Agreement from day one.

And you have a role in the future. You have huge potential on this island – to develop the island economy, to work together on infrastructure development and service provision, to improve social protection, to learn from each other. This is not just the work of politicians and civil servants. We need everybody on board. We need your help, your knowledge, your ideas and your advice. We need your engagement with Government to work for peace, reconciliation and co-operation across this island. I hope, with your Conference here President and being very conscious that we are very close to the next movement of events here in Northern Ireland, that we can build a better dialogue on all these issues, but I particularly thank this Congress of 2005 for your work and support over all of the last number of years on this issue and I deeply appreciate that President.

President, in a world in which change has become one of the few constants, it is also appropriate that I acknowledge this morning the relevance of the goals of Congress: your commitment to work for economic development, social cohesion and justice by upholding the values of solidarity, fairness and equality. It is my view that these values provide us with a solid foundation with which to address with confidence the many shared challenges that lie ahead of us all.

The instrument through which we have worked together is social partnership. Through the partnership process, we have helped to ensure that the policies of Government and the efforts of the social partners create the right environment to secure jobs and living standards. It is twenty years ago now since I met Congress on a document you had produced, an excellent document, that dealt with the times then, the jobs crises and it is from that time that we have been working to deal with that crisis and lost of other crises. In fact we probably always have crises, but anyway as you go through life at least if you can tick a few off you feel some sense of satisfaction.

In terms of economic growth, job creation, unemployment and income per head, our performance has compared very favourably with the rest of the European Union, while days lost through industrial disputes are now at a record low. This is not to say that we can be complacent, as evidenced in particular by the worrying increase in redundancies. However, we have come through in much better shape within the framework of social partnership than many who see no need of a social dialogue process.

Particularly welcome, to you as well as to me, has been the massive employment growth over a sustained period. Even as recently as 8 years ago, we had long-

term unemployment approaching 6 percent. Today that now stands at 1.5 percent.

But social partnership has also brought about substantive net income gains for all employees. Irish workers – according to the OECD, and I don't be quoting any of my own research but the OECD which is an international body of the highest repute based in Paris. They say that we pay the third lowest tax and social insurance contributions in the industrial world.

Critically, the OECD found that, when child benefit payments are taken into account, the Irish tax and welfare system is the most generous in the world for single income families on average industrial wages.

The Government has targeted tax reductions on workers on low earnings. When combined with the relatively high national minimum wage, second highest in the community, which we have introduced, I am satisfied that we have a firm commitment to protecting the position of those on modest wages.

Reducing the tax burden on workers on all incomes, but especially low incomes, is only part of the dividend from sensible economic policies, complemented by our partnership agreement.

We have made substantial progress in recent years in terms of social infrastructure, with health spending, over 106,000 people working in the health service today and in education, where we have put in enormous resources, and thankfully now more and more of our young people, whether it be in trades or professions, but going on to get further education beyond first and second level.

Last December's budget reflected the Government's commitment to the welfare of those in greatest need in our society. It delivered a substantial social package to reduce poverty and inequality and promote social inclusion. In total, we will spend a record figure, €12.25 billion, on social welfare this year - doubling the figure of just eight years ago.

The budget included a range of other measures, including a special multi-annual funding package for disability, worth almost €900 million over the period to 2009. Combined with the new disability legislation, this will deliver real and immediate benefit to those who are at the margins and need our help most.

The Congress of Trade Unions and Government share a conviction that quality of life issues, as your General Secretary has said and the necessary underpinning infrastructure are just as important as national competitiveness as the more traditional cost issues.

That is particularly true of housing. A growing, young population needs housing of good quality, at reasonable prices. That is why the Government has given such attention to housing policy over the last few years.

In global terms, our housing performance has been enormously significant. Last year, 77,000 units were completed. This year it looks as if it will be higher. And that was the 10th year of record output. Nearly 500,000 units have been built in the last 10 years, and it means President, that over 30% of the country's total housing stock now is under 10 years old. An extraordinary statistic. We are building at a rate of just short of 20 units per 1000 of population. Now you can say what does that mean? But if you check across the water they are building at a rate of 3 units per 1000 of population. The United States are doing about double that and most of Europe are doing somewhere in between 3 and 6 and that's the level that we have been going at.

However, demand has been such that market house prices, or young couples, in particular, is a real priority because it is still tough out there as we know from many of you in this hall, or at least from your families.

We introduced stamp duty changes in Budget last year, targeted at the first time buyers, helping to make second-hand homes more affordable to first time buyers by significantly reducing, and in many instances eliminating, the level of stamp duty payable.

We have facilitated the introduction to the market by Bank of Ireland of an affordable mortgage product with substantially lowered deposit requirements which was the big difficulty for young people in particular. This opens up the possibility of a significant reduction in the direct costs for first-time buyers, making the prospect of buying their own home an achievable goal. We are finalising discussions with a number of other major financial institutions to extend the range of affordable mortgage finance products available to the first time buyer. This will be a continuing priority during the rest of this year.

We have enacted, President, new legislation to facilitate the sale of affordable units by developers and builders directly to purchasers, with claw back arrangements to prevent profiteering.

In this context, the Affordable Housing Initiative, which we have collectively worked so hard on these last few years, under *Sustaining Progress* is an innovative approach that has brought about collaboration on a cross agency basis like never before. Many different organisations are involved, from the Departments who have made lands available to the various local authorities who are project managing the Initiative from green field site, through planning, to actual construction.

We have released public lands, with a total potential yield of over 10,000 units, meeting the milestone target contained in *Sustaining Progress*. And I remember at the start of the process people said cynically to me, not in Congress I add, that we would never get the State to hand over land of over 10,000 units.

Some 70 sites have now been assigned to the Initiative so that battle is over.

In his latest progress report, Des Geraghty has pointed out that construction of housing units - from identification of the land, through the planning and development process, to completion of the first housing units, assuming no unforeseen delays and by then he means planning – takes at least four years and this is with the private sector using all their power and might. Against that backdrop, President, the Government has made very significant progress with Congress over the past two years.

We have agreed to the greater use of fast-tracking mechanisms for accelerated delivery of affordable housing. In this context, a premium site at Harcourt Street that you have read about today was identified as a land swap option and brought to the market. This was the first of a whole string of exchanges of state/local authority land for completed (turnkey) housing units and/or zoned lands for housing. The whole basis of this is to quicken the process.

The bid process for the Harcourt site has now been completed and I am glad that this morning that we are able to say that will result in nearly 200 affordable units being made available over the next number of months, commencing this month rather than having to go through the long process that would take a few years. So where we would have been waiting three or four years to develop that site, by doing the land swap under various council arrangements, the people this time next year will be living in those units because the vast majority of them are already built or very near completion during this summer building season.

Based on the experience with this pilot project, I can also confirm to you today that six further sites have now been selected as candidates for the land swap option. These are being brought to the market now as a matter of urgency.

They include sites at Backweston and sites at Model Farm Road, McGee Barracks, Gormanston and the old Garda Station at Harcourt Terrace – most of them very large sites.

Current delivery of affordable housing units for the Initiative, including arrangements under Part V of the Planning and Development Act (otherwise known as the 20% levy scheme) is projected to yield 3,300 completed units in the period 2005 - 2006. Delivery across all of the affordable housing schemes is now projected at 7,300 units for the same period.

However, the Affordable Housing Initiative has proved that commitment and enthusiastic support, of themselves, are not enough to deliver affordable housing quickly and on an ambitious scale. We need a more coordinated structure that can deliver more and faster.

I am pleased to announce today that the Government has decided to establish, with immediate effect, a new Agency – the Affordable Homes Partnership – to drive and co-ordinate the delivery of affordable housing in the Greater Dublin Area.

The agency will be focused on early improvements in the delivery of affordable housing. The Agency's first tasks will include helping to accelerate the *Sustaining Progress* Affordable Housing Initiative that I have just reported. The Agency will also issue a call for proposals from third parties in order to identify further appropriate sites for affordable housing right across the Dublin area.

Furthermore, the Agency will provide a co-ordinated public information service on the various aspects of Affordable Housing, thus making it easier for people to find out what is on offer and how to avail of it.

Initially, the Agency will work within the existing planning and development framework but additional legislative powers will be made available should they prove necessary. In addition, consideration is to be given by the appropriate Departments to approaches dealing with land options and a 'use it or lose it' approach to relevant planning permissions. So if they don't move it they lose the permission. The new Agency will also interact closely with Departments responsible for key infrastructure delivery, such as transport, schools and water so that we don't make some of the mistakes of the past. This will ensure a rapid, 'whole of Government' approach to affordable housing developments.

The Board of this Agency will, initially, include Managers of the four Dublin authorities and a number of independent members and we will keep open the option of adding additional members as the need arises.

I am delighted to let you know that Des Geraghty - no stranger to you – has been invited, and has agreed, to serve as Chairman of the new Agency. Des' keen interest in this subject, and I appreciate the effort that he has put in to the last three years as evidenced by his close shepherding of the Affordable Housing Initiative under *Sustaining Progress*, means that he is well placed to take on this role.

The work of the Agency, President, in particular by increasing the availability of land for housing, will complement the extensive measures already underway to improve the delivery of social housing. As a further element of overall housing policy, the Government will address the more medium term issues for the provision of social and affordable housing in the early part of the Autumn. This

process will be informed by the outcome of the statutory housing needs assessment currently underway. It will also reflect the work underway in the Housing Forum, reviewing the effectiveness of the existing social and affordable housing schemes in the context of *Sustaining Progress*.

The initiatives I am announcing today, which because we are going to set up the agency immediately, will start next week. If we need legislation afterwards we can bring it in. I am not going to spend another twelve months of my life waiting for the legislation. I don't think its necessary but we will do it later if we do, but we will start it next week with the Chief Executive, with the Chairman and with the managers of the authorities and of course we can look out onto the broader country if we need to do that, but the problem is most acutely in the greater Dublin area which now covers a good few counties. So I think this our commitment, President, to ensure that our housing needs are met, and that ordinary working men and women who can't afford the 70,000 being built year in year out can aspire to home ownership in sustainable communities. And as I said when I said I would get the 10,000 sites, I equally want to say to Congress today, it has my commitment to drive this forward and my Department's effort to drive this forward so that we see people in houses rather than what sometimes happens that we just talk about them, so thank you for your support going forward with this initiative.

I want to make very clear the Government's continued strong commitment to pursuing Ireland's economic and social prosperity through the process of social dialogue and partnership. We have now had six national partnership agreements since 1987 and are due to begin discussions on a new agreement towards the end of this year.

The NESC is working on a new Strategy Report to be published in the autumn. This will set the context within which negotiations on any new social partnership agreement will be undertaken. Their analysis will take account of the pressure of globalisation, the increasing role of services, the implications of migration and the role of productivity in supporting living standards. It also needs to analyse how economic progress and policy change can further reduce poverty and inequality and create a sustainable system of social protection.

The pace of economic restructuring is accelerating. Enlargement of the European Union, and I know John Monks was talking about this yesterday, and the dynamic growth of economies like China, represent a significant external challenge. Equipping our workers and our students for the workplace of the future requires new thinking and new approaches.

Potentially, we all have much to gain from adjustment that leads to a more efficient division of labour and faster growth. But transformation pressures can also give rise to periods of insecurity that affect peoples' everyday lives. We must therefore work together, through the partnership process, to ensure that

these threats are averted. We must provide bridges from the old to the new. We must ensure that our people feel confident to embrace the reality of change.

This is about Lifelong Learning. It is about broad social security and active labour market policies. And it is about equality of opportunity. We have reached a point in our national development where future prosperity has never been more dependent on unlocking the talents of each and every citizen. I was at a meeting yesterday where people said that within the 2 million people that make up the workforce of the Republic of Ireland today that there are only 28,000 that can be clearly identified that are unemployed, so there are the challenges of how we bring on our young people, how we re-skill others and try to extend our market to others that perhaps really want the chance to join it without in any way forcing people. That means appropriate education and training opportunities for people with low skills and in vulnerable jobs to help them. We need to establish new and innovative ways of meeting our future needs in the area of retirement and pension security. As you all know, we also face particular challenges in the area of care – childcare, eldercare and care for people with disabilities. These are areas which I believe are hugely important for the next decade and beyond.

The challenge of delivering quality services in these areas will require a more innovative and dynamic public service. This means a public service that is committed to renewal and that embraces proactively the management, organisational and technological changes that are necessary. Those of us who share a commitment to quality public services should be very clear that the enemy of progress – in health, in education, in transport and in other areas too – is failure to accept that yesterday's solutions will not work in today's environment. It is not that we want to change it for changes sake, it just doesn't work.

I think it is important and it should also be clear that how we go about setting wage levels is critically important for stability and growth in our economy.

Some commentators seem to believe that we should move away from collective bargaining structures, including the well-tried and tested bargaining procedures within social partnership. There are of course anti-partnership and anti-union voices to be heard, domestically as well as internationally. For them, the very low levels of union membership in some countries are seen as an attractive goal. They overlook the fact that collective bargaining continues and is a critically important influence on wage levels, even in economies with low union density if that is what they tend to like.

We can best protect high income levels by setting wage growth at a sensible and affordable level. It is important that we do not undermine the job creation capability and that we prove that we can generate in the Irish economy our international attractions as a place to work and to invest which is still hugely strong. This is the context in which a successor to the current agreement will

be considered so that we try and plan it out, to keep it right and to build on the areas where we want to do better.

President, the need to change, to benefit from globalisation is not unique to Ireland. It is a challenge facing all of the Member States of the European Union.

Our membership of the EU has been fundamental to the transformation of our country. Our economic progress has been hugely supported by our access to the EU Internal market, by EU structural and cohesion funding and by the discipline required for membership of the Economic and Monetary Union. Our social progress has been underpinned by progressive EU social legislation, an integral component of social Europe. Our national commitment to social partnership is reflected at the European level in the Tripartite Social Summit.

The past weeks have not been good for the European Union as you know very well. The rejection of the European Constitution in France and The Netherlands, two founding members of the Union, has been a major shock into the system. The damage to the Union was further compounded by the failure of the European Council to agree on the future funding of the EU. The negotiations on the EU funding broke down, to say it mildly, in bad temper and acrimony.

However, the European Council has launched a broad debate on the European Constitution, and on Europe generally, across the Union. The National Forum for Europe will take the lead in promoting and facilitating this national dialogue in Ireland. For its part, the Government will publish a White Paper on the European Constitution in September. This will explain clearly what is in the European Constitution and why we need such a Constitution in Europe today.

I would like to see all sectors of society, President, including the social partners, participate in this national debate.

The European Constitution, unlike the Treaties it replaces, sets out clearly what the citizens of Europe stand for and what their values are: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The Constitution also identifies the type of society that Europeans want - a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women prevail.

In addition to establishing a Union of values, the Constitution also establishes a Union of rights. The incorporation of the Charter on Fundamental Rights into the European Constitution provides new rights for European citizens that the Institutions of the Union must respect.

In keeping with Europe's strong commitment to the protection of the weak and vulnerable, to social protection and cohesion and to the rights of workers, the Constitution provides for a Union based on solidarity. It includes the fight against social exclusion and discrimination among the objectives of the EU. It makes legal provisions for the promotion of equal treatment of women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of the rights of the child. It includes commitments to social dialogue involving Trades Unions.

The national debate, President, on Europe launched by the European Council will be an opportunity to inform the people about the benefits of the European Constitution. The Government and the social partners can promote the message that the values enshrined in the European Constitution are our values. The type of society which the European Constitution wants to create in Europe reflects our society.

I remain convinced that the ratification and entry into force of the European Constitution is in our country's interest and in the interest of Europe as a whole. As globalisation intensifies, as the competitive challenge from China, India and others increases, Europe must remain united. Day in, day out now President, when I work with IDA and Enterprise Ireland to try to win a project for Ireland, it is the case that never the opposition any more as a European country. All of the major ones that I have been drawn into since Christmas, it is either Singapore, Puerto Rico, India – some regions of it, or China. Not one case in this calendar year, and we are now almost half way through it, have I had to fight against a European colleague for a major inward investment. And I say this to my colleagues, and I have to say frankly sometimes, I don't think the penny fully drops because if Europe doesn't work together it is like ourselves not working together and we always know what happens when we make that mistake.

The debate on the future of Europe is not a debate that is remote from the Trade Union movement. It demands your active engagement. It deals with issues that are vital to your members. And it has enormous implications for the future success of the Irish economy and its workers. In pursuing the goals of the Lisbon Agenda – to make Europe a dynamic, knowledge-based economy – Europe has recognised – not least in the light of our own domestic experience – that this can best be achieved by national partnerships which are deeply rooted in a commitment to economic and social reform.

So colleagues, I look forward to hearing the voice of the Trade Union movement and yesterday I had the opportunity of reading John Monks' speech and clearly putting forward the issues that are important to ETUC, but I think they are issues equally important to us in the national discussion about Europe which will take place this Autumn.

Finally, President, in a globalised and increasingly interdependent world, the strength of our economy, the attractiveness of its society and the sustainability of

its institutions, north and south, will rest on the same foundation – the human qualities of its people, because that is what it comes down to at the end of the day.

And the future of the social partnership process is in the hands of all of the partners, together. I have no doubt about its continued relevance to meeting the challenges that I mentioned today. Challenges for the next few years, challenges for the next decade, challenges for the next generation are all important. I believe its own record of success in underpinning our economic and social transformation represents the best argument for continuing with the process. The challenges we now face are different from the ones where I took up this brief 20 years ago but they are no less complex and meeting them successfully is no less important. As somebody said to me recently, and asked me the question from where I sit, which is the easiest – dealing with the problems of failure or dealing with the problems of success, well some mornings I am not too sure but anyway, most of the time I think I would rather be dealing with the ones of success.

A country that has effectively full employment; a country that in the last twelve months has taken in 89,000 people from other European countries that is 88,000 of them working; a country that is changing from a lot of the old ways of the past to the new ways of the future; a country that has only 1% of the population of the European Union but in many of the sectors is taking almost 30% of the foreign direct investment; a country that has seen a whole lot of our own innovated people in the skills and the trades in various industries now build their own successful companies and give very successful employment; a country where more and more of our people are getting higher education and more and more of our people are able to stay at home and are able to build a good standard of living. But that doesn't remove from the problems and the challenges and there are lots of problems and lots of challenges. And as always it takes some of us to try to come up and find solutions that lead the way forward, so that people in ten years time or fifteen years time when we are now told by the people who do the demographics of the future that fifteen years time, I know that sounds a long, long time away, if you look fifteen years back, this week fifteen years back the country, at least all of us in the Republic were celebrating *Italia 90* and all gone zaney for a few weeks, that wasn't long ago.

More infrastructure, modernising our industries, modernising our services, the difficulties with health, more and more people want education: these are the challenges, the challenges of the elderly and childcare issues, but these are challenges I believe we can find resolutions for and to say to you, President, to the Vice President, General Secretary and to all of the delegates, it is an honour to be with you once again. I thank you for the invitation. As I said, I respect and trust and believe always that I work to gain your confidence in dealing with the issues of whatever they are on the day. They are not always easy, not always easy to bring them there or to bring conclusions but I appreciate that and I

appreciate your efforts in them too. Whether we always succeed or not, I appreciate the fact that we always have a relationship and that we work together in the best way we can, so it is an honour to be at your Conference. I wish you well in this Conference 2005, I wish you well for the future.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Conference can I call the General Secretary, David Begg to move thanks to the Taoiseach

David Begg, Congress General Secretary

Taoiseach, I indeed want to thank you very much for that very wide ranging and comprehensive address which, you will have judged from the reaction of the delegates, has been very well received by them. Just in touching on some of the points you made, Taoiseach, in terms where you mention Northern Ireland and we have spent here a very happy week in Northern Ireland, where we have been treated with great friendship by everybody we have met within the political process, we have had the experience of being treated by the City Council and by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Wallace Brown and it has been a very rewarding experience for all of us and that is very important because Congress is an All-Ireland body. We value this heritage that we have very deeply and our objective to promote our programme of advancement for all peoples regardless of their political persuasion is very important to us.

So from that point of view I can only say that our experience here this week has been very, very encouraging indeed. We would like to see greater synergy indeed between Northern Ireland and the Republic and there is considerable scope for it. On the main theme of your own address today on that of housing, the President in his opening address to Conference reflected on this and the opportunities that there are between Northern Ireland and the Republic to learn. In the case of the Republic I think, from the experience of the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland and how successful it has been and indeed the President has used his term of office to try to link into the work which Des and others are doing in the Republic on this and I'm very hopeful that in the context of what you have announced today that we can take that further. I think also Taoiseach if I can make a plea, that we would very much like to be more deeply involved with the North/South Bodies should the facility or the circumstance arise for us to do that. I'm very well aware of the sensitivities of all of this and this is not within your gift exclusively, but I would just ask on behalf of Conference if I could that, if the opportunity arises to give us an opportunity to engage there we would wish to do

that and I think the engagement would be fruitful and productive for everybody on the island.

Taoiseach, you have referred to Congress very kindly in your address and you have mentioned the values upon which we have attempted to build our programmes and it is very important that you do that and that the distinction is made between values and ideology because while Congress has always tried not to be a prisoner of any ideology, we have a very clear direction based on the values which we hold and which I'm quiet sure that we share with yourself. And I think that the curse of modern day politics in many ways is the extent to which people adhere to fundamentalist views and are not willing to see that there are opportunities to achieve objectives outside of that single approach that they want to take and this is most unfortunately experienced by people who believe that the market can serve every possible objective and solve every problem.

Our experience I have to say in the last two years is that untold problems have been caused by the adherence to that sort of notion which doesn't really have a place, I agree with you, you have to change as things change but you stick rigidly with the values and you find ways to respond and meet what are the sort of core of that set of values. Just if I may attempt to reflect to you what I think is the outcome if you like or the consensus of the Conference this week in terms of the Republic.

It is really that we have done really well as you have said over the last many years since 1994 in building a very strong economy. We have though to make progress on a range of social issues as well. And the starting point for that discussion should not be as it were an altruistic approach that now that we have the money we will try and deal with will try and deal with the social issues. We have to see it in terms that the importance of social cohesion to economic development hat there's a synergy between those two objectives that they are not mutually exclusive in any way nor indeed the employers. You often hear the employers representatives say 'oh well if we have the money you know we don't mind if you do these other things'. They look at it from the wrong perspective and the proof of that I think are the achievements of the Nordic countries which were very well identified by Wim Kok in his relatively recent reports on the Lisbon Strategy, so that dealing with the social development is crucially important and of course what you have announced today in relation to housing fits into that very nicely because our view as a Congress and the reason we engaged in the Social Partnership project way back in 1987 was a recognition that if all you were concerned about was wage bargaining you wouldn't bother to do it centrally.

There is no great dividend from doing it centrally, there is arguably less of a dividend in doing it centrally at a time of tight labour market conditions where everybody could go out and get everything they can for themselves. But if they were to do that they wouldn't be able to address the issues which make the quality of life you know worth having basically and that is the kind of judgement

which has informed the Congress perspective, based on the values that I have talked about, that if we can achieve things in what use to be called the social wage well then everybody would be better off as a result of that and housing of course fits into that and I want to particularly welcome what you have said and am very, very pleased indeed with the establishment of the agency and I hope it will develop further from that and am very pleased with the appointment of Des as the head of that agency.

And I would encourage you Taoiseach to even go further and when you can to take on board the recommendations of the National Economic & Social Council with respect to housing and land management because I think a thing that has offended many of us and I'm sure I know myself from my many conversations with you yourself too, that it is wrong somehow that in a finite landmass that land that is almost a natural resource can be used in circumstances where young people trying to get on the housing ladder are crucified by the prices which make a small number of people rich. There's something fundamentally wrong with that. So you know I think the NESC report does give us the options to deal with that and hopefully they can be taken into public policy. I would also like to mention just a few other parts of our programme, if you take Public Services; I've come to the conclusion myself that there's no use addressing the Public Service question from the point of view of whether you believe in a strong role for the State in the economy or not. I don't think people don't seem to be influenced by that. But I think people can be influenced by considerations of enlightened self interest because if you look at a few recent things, there are certain problems people have which no matter how much money they have you cannot save yourself from. I mean if you take accident and emergency, if you have a heart attack, you could be a millionaire five times over, but you need accident and emergency to work for you. if you look at the Leas Cross situation, it was extraordinary that people were paying €46,000 a year to go in there and many of them had mortgaged houses to do that or sold off their houses or whatever. But it is no protection for them unless the system works right. And to have a system where people are using low paid labour, charging huge amounts of money like that and not providing to people what they are entitled to is fundamentally wrong and the difficulty is that the State can't avoid the risk either because as you know the State has had to intervene in that in order to provide that service so what I would say from just those two examples that anybody who thinks that privatisation of any element of the health and caring services is a solution to problems for anybody regardless of what their wealth is, is making a huge mistake.

We are this week also talking Taoiseach about pensions and about the whole agenda of caring and you might have noticed that we have launched a policy positions on a range of issues like this and hopefully if you do give us an invitation in the Autumn we will be happy to accept it and to come along with our positions prepared dealing with industrial policy indeed as well. And also indeed we will want to ask you to see if we can find a means of dealing with the recent exposure of the abuses of migrant workers and the whole question of an

immigration policy. So I think we have much to talk about and I suppose we all should learn from experience and the learning I think we're doing and looking back over social partnership over the years and what it has achieved and looking at where we are now there's a sense I think, in our councils anyway, that what we really need to do is pick out on a few key things that are important and essential to turning this country from being a very good country into a great country and we can figure out a timeframe in which that can be done and that would be the way I think to proceed for the future.

The last thing I'll mention just on that agenda, though Taoiseach, is that we all have to bear in mind that you know from politics you can all the greatest policies in the world as a party and if you don't get elected that's not much good to you. In the same way for us, we can have a very high minded position on a policy level but if our people on the ground are not being reasonably well treated its like being inside the tent smoking the pipe of peace but the cavalry are outside killing your braves and that, unfortunately, is what is happening to us at a practical level in a lot of employments. There is an extraordinary hostility to trade union organisations still in the country and it's almost as if we are beset by band of the wicked while we are trying to do business with all these people sort of attacking us who have no interest in the country. May I say, they have only interest in greed and in a way I think really we have to find some way of preserving the institutional role of the trade unions and also the role of our activists on the ground because it's the activists: we can't do anything without those people who are willing to represent us at ground level and we have a responsibility I think to try to protect them at the end of the day.

In the case of Europe, Taoiseach, I noticed and listen carefully to what you said and we had the pleasure of being addressed by two cabinet ministers from Britain during the week and we had discussions with them about Europe and where it is at the moment and you know I find the British position kind of extraordinary, although I notice I thought you were very downbeat after last weekend's experience. Like Britain's strange situation in that if you looked at it and looked at the level of public spending in Britain 45% of GDP and public spending you have a million public servants more in Britain than you have in France but yet Britain wants to present itself as a sort of an American surrogate in Europe, I can't understand why they do it but then when they do and they convince everybody that that is their objective they can hardly be surprised when the rest of the people in Europe think in fact that there is an American invasion of Europe. It seems to me that the you know look the neo-liberals in pushing out their agenda and their objectives the great danger that I see is that they will fatally injure the European Project and the European Project is very important, it is important first of all because it is a way in which no one country as you said yourself earlier on can deal with globalisation on its own. But Europe can make globalisation into a tameable civilised force in which you can maintain a quality of life as well as an economical destiny. And the other thing of course is the soft power of Europe has been extremely successful in diplomacy is a huge

contradiction between what has been achieved in the Balkans and by comparison to the Americans in Iraq and the way they approach things, so I actually feel that Europe, Taoiseach, is the hope of the world and I think this Conference will want to wish you every success in your, you have been probably been one of the most successful statesmen of recent years on the European scene and I think the carry on of some people in Europe at the moment puts a very heavy burden on your shoulders, but we wish you very well in all the work that you do there.

Finally Taoiseach, I want to say one thing to you: you are in a kind of a lonely position in many respects in the leadership role that you have to carry out and from time to time I suppose like your great predecessor you look into your own heart and figure out what is the right thing to do, and all I will say to you Taoiseach, is just remember when you do so, the heart beats on the left and follow your own instincts.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

I think that the applause shows that the General Secretary certainly hit the nail on the head with regard to the issues that we are concerned with and while it's not always to do things and negotiate in public at least we have set the agenda for the negotiations that are going to start in September.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Delegates we're going to resume with motion 38 if Jerry Shanahan can come forward to move 38, please.

Can we settle down please, if people are going out can you do so quietly, please.

Ok can we settle down and end the discussion in the hall. If people are moving out can you do so quietly because I want to give Jerry the courtesy of allowing him to make his contribution uninterrupted? Jerry.

Jerry Shanahan, AMICUS

Thank you. President, delegates, Jerry Shanahan AMICUS moving motion 38, on pensions. Delegates, the Congress document we fully support and we commend the document and its preparation but we want to focus in on three particular aspects of it, that is in relation to defined benefit, regulations which prohibit pension schemes from carrying forward surpluses and the question of mandatory occupational pensions, that is of course the second pillar or supplementary

pensions. I don't want to rehearse all the arguments on refined benefit they are in the documents for anybody to read but let us just say that defined benefits are becoming a thing of the past and its not even a question that they are being replaced by acceptable or appropriate defined contribution schemes, that is not happening, that is not the case. Defined benefit schemes where they do exist in many cases are being closed off, now members of those schemes may feel that that of itself preserves the benefits for them, that is not the case. The case is that if you do not have fresh members of staff, new members coming into the schemes, over time the values of those schemes will erode and over time the schemes themselves will be shut down because they will no longer be financially viable. so just to think that if your scheme is closed off to new entrants that your safe, you're not safe, be very clear on that. People must resist by whatever means possible closure of defined benefits schemes.

There is a second argument and employers cannot necessarily be accused of being at fault here, this is when it comes to pension surpluses. The regulations require that schemes cannot have or cannot carry forward surpluses. Therefore when schemes hit bad times and risks increase they are unable to draw on reserves. Now that is something that needs to be changed and it can be changed by regulation but at the same time it should not be left open to unscrupulous (*tape change text missing*).... that is a requirement if we are to protect DB schemes.

The third and we believe one of the most important steps going forward is this question of mandatory schemes. We already know that we have mandatory state schemes, which currently provide something in the order of 30% of the average industrial wage in the Republic. The target is 34%. What we're talking about is a mandatory supplementary scheme, private sector in the main, the public sector has coverage of upwards of 90so this is primarily a private sector issue. We know that the coverage is averaged over public and private sector schemes therefore you get a false impression of coverage in the private sector. In areas of the private sector it's as low as 15 or 16%. The PRSAs have failed. This is admitted by the Pensions Board, it is admitted by Congress but we have a concern, and our singular concern is this, that Congress does not seem to be giving the emphasis to mandatory pension provision that it should be given. It is as if it has already been taken off the table before it has even been out on it. In simple terms the objective of mandatory pension provision is to provide pension schemes to workers in companies where they do not already have them.

Now, if somebody can come up an alternative strategy that provides something that will obviate the need for mandatory schemes then fine, we will fully support that. But even going onto negotiations you should not take an ace card off the table which is the demand for mandatory pensions, if something better comes up take it off the table but leave it there unless something better comes along.

I ask you to support the motion and thank you.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Is there a formal seconder for 38? Formally seconded. Ok can I invite speakers to 36, 37, 38.

Judy Linton, UNISON

President, delegates, Judy Linton from UNISON speaking in support of motion 36.

Many public sector workers are members of a good occupational scheme and would be looking forward to retirement secure in the knowledge that we will have an adequate income to survive on, I don't think so. The fact is that the pension's provision in the UK is in a state of crisis. Many employers in the private sector have closed their final salary schemes and replaced them with inferior defined contributions schemes. Thankfully the same has not happened to the big public sector schemes such as local Government and the NHS scheme but we cannot afford to be complacent.

These schemes are also under review and there is no doubt employers would like to downgrade them if they thought they could get away with it. The employers attempt to justify losing final salary schemes have risen and have become too high to become sustainable but lets look at the facts, during the 80's and 90's when stock market returns were very high, many employers took contribution holidays meaning that they did not pay any money into the scheme on the grounds that there was already enough. Pensions are an issue of importance to everyone in this hall faced with the difficulty and complexity of pensions. It is sometimes tempting to bury ones head in the sand and simply hope that everything will work out. I want to urge all of you today not to take this course, it is vital that all of us whatever our age campaign together to oppose the closure of final salary schemes and to fight for the right to retire in dignity, able to rely on an adequate, secure pension.

Please support the motion.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Are there any other speakers for 36, 37 and 38?

Tommy White, TEEU

Chairman, delegates, Tommy White, TEEU and a trustee of the construction industry pension scheme, the largest private pension scheme in the country.

Chairman we hear again and again and I applaud the Congress motion from the Executive Council, we hear again and again about what should be done and what unions should be doing to protect defined benefit schemes and to go in there and fight tooth and nail. We hear very little about the tools that are available to us to stop the large holes and the disadvantages built into the legislation surrounding defined benefit schemes. For example the ludicrous arrangement whereby companies can take pension holidays, they can be greatly in access this year and because the equity market falls the next year the scheme is in deficit and an argument is there for its closure or something to be done.

Other part of pension legislation being the even more immediate one, any employer who wishes, merely has to give the members of the scheme a certain degree of notice before he closes down the scheme. Now, Chairman, I think that's an intolerable thing and I don't think that it's a thing that's been picked up at Congress level for debate with Government and the National Pensions Board.

Can I just say one other thing? No, I will save it for the next one.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Thank you. Are there any other speakers for 36, 37 or 38? Yes?

Eamon Devoy, TEEU

Eamon Devoy, TEEU and Secretary for the Private Sector Committee, speaking to the motions on pensions.

As Rosheen said earlier, there's no simple solution to the current difficulties confronting a great deal of workers about pension schemes and we've entered into a major debate around this whole area and we've come to the conclusion that there's certainly no one shoe fits all solution to that. It may be actually easier to recommend what we should not do rather than what we should do in this whole area.

Well a couple of things have become quite clear in relation to compulsion, does anyone seriously believe that there would be any pension scheme at all in the construction industry if wasn't for compulsion? So the eye has to be kept clearly on that ball. If there's no commitment by the employers to enter into schemes where they don't exist then compulsion must become an option. Again on compulsion is an absolute disgrace that under the current legislation in this country that under the transfer of undertakings legislation that there's no

obligation on employers to maintain pensions schemes where they already exists and that needs has to be fixed as an absolute priority. There was somebody mentioned there earlier, one second chair, in relation to the private sector that's a general view, but in relation to the public sector it can't be taken for granted that workers in the public sector are immune from difficulty. If you look at the situation of the ESB where there's a €511 million deficit in the pension scheme and the workers there are facing major change in the near future. It's absolutely appalling, it has to be fixed, the employers proposing to turn a dividend to the Government this year of enormous proportions and a lot of that money could go towards resolving some, not all of that pension deficit. Thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, Congress Vice President

Ok we're still on 36, 37 and 38. No other speakers, we're going to proceed to the vote on those three motions.

So all those in favour of motion 36 which was moved in the name of the Executive Council please show. Against? Abstentions? That's carried.

37 which was in the name of the GPMU, all those in favour? Against? Abstentions? Carried unanimously.

Motion 38 in the name of AMICUS, all those in favour please show? Against? Abstentions? Carried unanimously.

We're now going to proceed to take motion 39 on the Construction Industry Pension Scheme and that will be followed by a contribution by Charlie Hammond from the Congress Retired Workers Committee. Thank you.

Eric Fleming, Dublin Council of Trade Unions

Chairman, Eric Fleming moving this motion on behalf of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Unlike other industries and other people being spoken about in the Republic the Construction Industry actually enjoys, workers should enjoy the privilege of having a mandatory pension scheme. Unfortunately we at this point in time are now fairly convinced that's really not the case. The reason for that is that a lot of the employers are just not paying into the scheme, they're robbing the scheme and robbing it blind. Just prior to coming to this Conference all last week I spent a lot of time chasing a builder who I'm glad to say has been working on a lot of public contracts, was forced to pay one third of a million over to the pension scheme. Now you might say isn't that worth applauding but I would hold that

applaud because the fact of the matter is that employer has done that before and I am absolutely certain he will do it again, he's that kind of a guy, he comes from that kind of breed and there out there and there's plenty of them.

At the moment in the construction industry there's up to a quarter of a million people working in it, take out architects, engineers and ancillary workers you're looking at the potential there for a hell of a lot of workers than the 65,000 workers that are registered in the scheme. There's an estimate that at least 50% of the people who should be getting that pension are not getting it at the moment. We've tried our best I think as unions to do what we can there. On a day to day basis we successfully chased up lots of employers and indirectly through the construction industry monitoring agency we do tremendous work in being able to get some of these employers around the table and get the money off them but unfortunately its, this whole problem is far to great for us to handle in that way and we've concluded that if we allow this to continue a lot of employers will start withdrawing from the scheme because the people who are not compliant are going in there and making them very uncompetitive, they can't get contracts.

We had various campaigns, we've gone to meet the Minister, Minister Brennan says he wants everybody in the country in a pension scheme, well the best thing he can do is make sure that the mandatory aspect of our scheme is put into practice and put into practice immediately. And the only way we can do that is you can't trust the builders, you cannot trust them to voluntarily hand over the money, they don't do it. Some of them do it but lots of them don't. Therefore you can't trust the employers federation because we have asked them to help us and they have failed miserably to do that.

Finally, there is a way of doing this, and it's in that motion. We had a wet time scheme in the construction for many, many decades and it's succeeded, and it's succeeded for this reason, the state deducted the money and that is the answer in this particular instance. It will not cure everything but I would suggest you get the 40 or 50% increase that that scheme deserves and I think could look forward to if we got this introduced in the morning and I think we should pursue it and I think we should pursue it vigorously.

Thank you very, very much Chairman.

Tom Ryan

Thank you comrades formally seconding the motion. About ten years ago at some Conference, there's so many Conferences I cant remember, we had a debate on pensions and a very young delegate got up and he said that why should he worried about pensions. By the time he had to worry about pensions most of the people in the building would be dead. Now ten years later he'd probably have changed mind because we all have to worry about pensions, and

for example I come from the printing industry. The printing industry pension fund, the industry fund is being wound up because of funding difficulties and doing the research and looking into the construction industry pension fund and as was stated it is the biggest pension fund in the country and if we can get a template on this, something that we can enforce and maybe move that on through other pension schemes I think we'll be doing a good days work and I commend the motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you.

Tommy White, TEEU

Chairman, delegates, Tommy White TEEU and a member, trustee, board member of the construction federation operatives pension scheme which is to be called in the future construction industry pension scheme.

Chairman, it's a few, this is the third, the last three Conferences this is the first one I've come to because I've become a little bit bored with Congress, its become too nice, too good, there's no arguments anymore, there's no debate, I don't even remember when a motion was opposed by anybody. All the bite is gone out of it. If I get the time I hope to put a bit of bite into it, but I may not be allowed the time to do that.

In relation to the pension scheme and the last speaker there are a number of misnomers, while my union broadly supports motion 39 there are a number of misnomers in it. The scheme says, the motion says it is casual and voluntary, there is nothing casual about the construction industry pension scheme, it is specifically a mandatory scheme covered by a registered employment agreement and any employer not following it is breaking the law. The motion contradicts itself by saying earlier on that it is a registered agreement with mandatory powers I'm not sure where it's going from there. But may I say very briefly the construction industry pension scheme was brought into existence following a six week strike in the construction industry in 1964. In 1979 workers trustees were brought on board of in the order of elected worker trustees through their unions, the unions nominated worker trustees are not any other body directly related to those paying into the scheme. The scheme after recent review now has a two thirds pension like all good schemes widows and orphans conditions, earlier retirement, uniquely no forced retirement at 65, but also retirement at 60 available to it and various other plus which makes it a classic scheme an excellent scheme. It is not subject to the vagaries of the market in so far as you have to go off and buy annuities, we deal with our own annuities and we run our

own scheme ourselves, there are no shareholders, there are no high placed well paid executives or otherwise and in that sense it is an excellent scheme. There is a monitoring agency; just one second if I can just get to make a point, five years ago there was 23% there was 20% compliant with this pension scheme throughout the workforce, the recognised workforce, now as a result of the monitoring agency and the board of trustees it is 70% compliant. In the last three years the monitoring agency brought.....

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Tommy, Tommy, Tommy, TOMMY

Tommy White, TEEU

In 42 million pounds, we are going in the right direction, we shouldn't seek to dismantle what is good and what is proving itself. Thank you,

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

OK Tommy. Thank you Tommy. Next speaker.

John Colman, CWU

Thank you Mr. President, John Colman, Communication Workers' Union. I just want to a point of information on second motion 39.

It's very important in my eyes because my late father was a construction worker, tradesman by law. Unfortunately when I was 17 he suffered an illness, there was no pension to be paid and no stamps to be paid so as you can tell there were a lot of hard times back in the early seventies in my house. So it's an important issue with regard to pension for all the employees and I consider this one to be somewhat back in the sixties again here when we're in 2005, we seem to be experiencing the same difficulty as those guys experienced back then in 1964 when the previous speaker outlined that there was already a strike action which necessitated some law and again I think its an educational bulletin that we did put out there to the various workers around the country and all 32 counties in regards to the rights of workers and some form of localised step forward setup and somewhat education in other words so again Conference I'd like to formally sort of back this motion 39 in its entirety. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker? Ok can we put motion 39 to the Conference, please, those in favour please show...those against...abstentions. Passed.

Before I call Charlie Hammond from the Retired Workers Committee I just want to make a few announcements.

There's a NIPSA rally in support of the opposition to the closures in the public libraries and education in general and looking for more resources. It's in Academy Street which is just around beside St Anne's Cathedral, or if you're more culturally orientated it's just around the corner from the John Hewitt bar. So they're looking for support from delegates and it starts at 1.20pm.

There's also a Palestinian fringe meeting on in Transport House which starts at a quarter past one.

There's also a Trades Council, all delegates or any delegate or even here as an observer who is a member of a Trades Council, there's a meeting here immediately after the Conference closes, it'll be held here in the main hall.

Thank you, Charlie

Charlie Hammond, Retired Workers Committee

Chairperson, colleagues, my name is Charlie Hammond; I'm representing the Retired Workers Committee here today. I just want to thank the Executive Committee first of all and the General Secretary of Congress for the invitation to say a few words. I also want to thank Hugh Geraghty for the help and all the assistance he gave us during his time as being the person to help out with the retired workers. I also want to wish him very good long retirement and welcome him into the club. And he'll soon realise that no matter what his background has been up to now he is now one of the disempowered. Because if you've been a worker and you haven't been in trade union you've never been empowered and if you've been a worker and you retire and you're no longer in the trade union then you're back to being disempowered. And this applies to everybody here sitting listening to me, it doesn't matter if you're on the Executive Council of Congress, it doesn't matter if you're the General Secretary of Congress, once you retire you're just a person who used to be something else. And you're dependant upon other people and therefore the other people must realise that as well as having power they have an obligation and I'd like to say a few words on that. Firstly I want to say that I'm not a moaner, I don't stand here moaning about being old, the alternative to being old is different and worse. The second thing, I don't consider myself badly off, I realise that I'm relatively well off, I'm ok. And

there are reasons for that, I grew up not expecting an awful lot, as the people who raised me likewise didn't expect an awful lot so therefore if you ask me how I'm doing, I'm doing great, everything's ok. But unless something is done now for people who are not in private pension schemes or are not in industrial pension schemes, in 20 years time you're going to have a disaster and I just want to say that if you just have a look at the people who are on pension at the moment, we fall into two categories, there are those of us that have an industrial pension plus an old age pension or part of an old age pension and by enlarge they are the people who over the period of their working lives have been constantly employees and did ok anyway, where able to buy a house and now live in that house. And then there's the other side of the people who came through long periods of sustained unemployment, who never could be comfortable whilst they were working, who never knew when they were going to be let go, who came home with their cards on a Friday night when they out to work on a Friday morning not even dreaming of their cards and those people now by enlarge have nothing to live on except the old age pension. Now I've heard a few things here in the last few minutes which I think are great, the chap from AMICUS made a very few important contributions. When I joined the Retired Workers Committee at first, its over 10 years ago, 11 years ago now, it coincided with a Government deciding they'd have a look at pensions and we made two, first of all we did an examination of how the old age pension stacked up in this country and secondly we made two submissions. And when we examined how the old age pension, remember in 1994 this country wasn't anything like it is now but we were surprised that when we went back to 1971 when the country was a basket case we found that the old age pension represented 34% of the average industrial wage in 1971, in 1994 when we had a look it was 27% of the average industrial wage and now its not even 34% its something like 31 or 32% of the average industrial wage. When we examined all that we put to the review body which was the coalition Government at the time, the Rainbow Coalition, they had decided they'd have a look, they set up a review body and we made a submission based on what we had found and the two points we made were that the old age pension should become, index linked, not index linked, related to the average industrial wage and we took the figure of 34% because that was the best figure we could find going back to 1971. When we examined what was happening in Europe, our old age pension represented in 1993 or 1994 the second lowest of average industrial wages, when we do that examination now we'd find out we are still in second last place in Europe even though we are the second richest country in Europe. Two things must be done; I've every confidence in the General Secretary of Congress, I defend him when I speak at community organisations, I defend the trade union movement when I speak in schools because if you haven't got the trade union movement you have nothing and I worked in jobs where there was no trade union and I know. And I know that if the Executive Committee, when we're gong into the next *Sustaining Progress* if a sustained effort is made to try and do something for old age pensions, two things minimum required to be done, get 34% of the average industrial wage as a next pension and ensure that a compulsory supplementary pension comes in, that will never

benefit me but it'll benefit every one of you. If those two things are done my visit here today has been well worth while. I just want to say thanks very much, I can never say anything without going over my time but I did the best I could and I just want to say I got a good hearing and thanks.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Ok call Paula Carey. Remember we wanted to move that part of the report but due to the fact that she was outside doing some preparation work for the Taoiseach coming so Paula.

Paula Carey, Congress Policy Officer on Social Affairs

Thank you president, Charlie Hammond's always a hard act to follow. Good morning delegates I'm delighted to get this opportunity to briefly present the Congress policy document – 'Caring for the Future' – which you will find in your packs.

The need for care, just to define for a moment what we are talking about, we're talking about childcare, we're also talking about care of people with disabilities and we're talking about care of the elderly in this document. On Tuesday afternoon the General Secretary identified the development of a care infrastructure as a future Congress priority. Aspects of care issues were discussed also yesterday in the health service debate. All I can do in the next few minutes is try to present the key ideas of the paper which is to develop a coherence in the approach to meeting care needs formed on the basis of what we know and future projections. The policy document delegates could unapologetically state that we urgently need a comprehensive coherent integrated national care initiative. As a country we know we have major problems accessing care, not only childcare but care of people with disabilities and care for older people. Going back to the 1980's we were looking for childcare to support 80,000 women at work, our voice on this issue has been constant, you heard it today, today we are seeking childcare to support 700,000 women at work. Obviously not all of these women need childcare but we do know on the basis of what was done the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform that there is a need for 220,000 childcare places as a necessity. The investment programme we have seen to date has delivered 90,000 places, colleagues we are looking for 100,000 childcare places, investment in that for the future.

The demand for care services the voice of people with disabilities in recent years has been relentless from their families and from their parents. We have made some progress but there is still huge outstanding for residential respite and day care services. Just as an example there are over 11,000 people with physical and sensory disability awaiting assessment for their services. We know that

there's a waiting list of 6,000 for respite care and 4,500 for PA's to go into the system. Colleagues we know very little about the needs for people with mental health problems. We also know delegates and as Charlie has referred to, the number of older people we have today is 430,000, over the next 30 years that is set to rise to 1 million people over the age of 65. There are clear and obvious needs there in terms of care, home care, nursing care and day care services.

Colleagues the increasing norm for single living for dual earner families and for employment patterns which are about long working hours, difficult commuting, housing patterns and general pressure on family life actually present significant challenges to the traditional way we support those in need of care. Among those populations there are growing expectations. We know the value of childcare is enhanced enormously by educational inputs. We know that independent living, greater integration in the community, more active and longer active lives, including participation in employment are important considerations when we are planning care services for people with disabilities and for older people.

External research has been taken on all aspects of the care agenda to date. We have been working on this. There's a large number of reports and some action plans. Equally there are significant commitments in some areas and the Taoiseach spoke this morning about the disability package. It is clear however delegates that progress on these separate actions and funding commitments will not be sufficient to meet existing or future needs. More importantly they do not have the capacity to deliver or develop a comprehensive integrated approach to our future care needs. And of greatest concern we heard in the last two days is the lack of the health services which would support a care infrastructure. Just by way of example we know that the ratio of physiotherapists we have in the country 45 to 100,000 of the population I tiny by comparison to a country like Denmark that has 163 per 100,000 of the population. These are just demonstrative statistics, There is a lot of information in the document set before you.

So delegates the document before you states the introduction of an integrated national care initiative would demonstrate as a country we accept that caring and a modern care infrastructure are now as important a priority for our continuing economic and social prosperity as a so called hard infrastructure of transport, roads and housing. We must invest in caring and placing higher value on carers if we are to meet the challenges ahead. And it would enable us to balance the roles of parents, families, the State, public, voluntary and private sector providers, employers and community organisations. The paper before you sets out proposals on those aspects of the care infrastructure which should be prioritised for investment and planning in the decade to come. It also identifies that this investment must be underpinned by greater support for families and more flexibility in the delivery of services and adaptation by employers to working arrangements in order to facilitate caring responsibilities of employees. It calls delegates for improvements in leave arrangements, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, carers leave, we have firm foundations for this type of

leave arrangements here but they need some very serious improvement in the years to come.

In conclusion delegates I want to draw your attention to the final section of the report you'll see on page 22 which sets a fairly comprehensive agenda, it calls for the development of coherence, and a common approach in respect of policy development, needs assessment, anticipation and provision of manpower requirements, standards - including qualifications of staff, standardised management, governance arrangements and funding. It also sets out a fairly comprehensive agenda in respect as say of the leave arrangements, of the development of flexible working arrangements and the development of our social protection system to ensure coverage for future forms of atypical work. It calls for medium term goals colleagues, 100,000 childcare places halving waiting lists for respite and residential care and eliminating them by 2015. It calls for the achievements of targets by Government set in respect of hospital services and residential places for older people and it calls for the development and adoption of a standards based approach in terms of staff qualification, terms and condition of staff, management and whole of service delivery. And finally delegates it calls for a statutory independent inspections and enforcement mechanisms. Delegates this requires a serious regulatory change in the environment in the way we do business. We know there are a combination of service providers, public, private and voluntary and we welcome the contribution of all but there must be a proper regulatory environment in order to meet the needs of care in the future. Thank you very much I recommend the report to you.

Mary Maher, National Union of Journalists

Mary Maher, National Union of Journalists speaking to the report I'd like to commend Congress on this excellent initiative it is very much in all of our interests, what I think David Begg referred to as enlightened self interest, that we insist on better care and better standards and qualifications for the carers and better pay.

And if I could have the indulgence of the chair I would like to draw attention to a campaign that the Irish Hospice Foundation is about to launch highlighting the terrible inadequacies in the care for the dying. This is going to be launched at a public lecture in memory of Mary Holland on July 7th in the Mansion House in Dublin. The speaker is Mary Robinson and our General Secretary David Begg is the chair. And there is no admission charge and all are welcome and I make that point at this Conference because Mary Holland who was of course a great journalist and very distinguished and will be long remembered especially here in Northern Ireland was also a dedicated trade union activist all of her working life. It is enough that they accept that she was a great social campaigner so that is reason enough why the Irish Hospice Foundation would want to commemorate

this lecture in her name but she also I think more of the impetus was greatly suffered greatly, she suffered from a slow degenerative disease, it was painful, terribly debilitating and what she and her family discovered was that there was no adequate care for her. She had hospitalisation, she has respite care in the hospice for two weeks at a time because she wasn't deemed to be actually dieing. The rest of the time she was reliant on nursing agencies at home. Most of the nursing was done valiantly by her daughter Kitty. It wasn't sufficient and I leave you with this comment, my doctor who happened to be her doctor said to me there is a great myth abroad that these problems would be solved if women hadn't gone out to work. It's nonsense.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Mary come on. Come on now.

Mary Maher, National Union of Journalists

We have growing generation of elder people who need proper care and I'm glad Congress is taking this initiative now.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Ok. I'd like to call our last speaker of this section is John Sweeney who is senior policy analyst at the National Economic and Social Council, John.

Address to Conference John Sweeney Senior Policy Analyst - National Economic and Social Council

President, General Secretary, Conference delegates, ladies and gentlemen, the most important single lesson that I have personally learned from my knowledge of trade union history is very simply expressed that social advance does not occur automatically. It's made to happen by determined people and that's why I feel it's such an honour to speak briefly to you this afternoon. You're those sorts of people who shape social progress out of the raw material that our economy threw up. You'd agree that the Republic of Ireland and in the economic field and Northern Ireland in the political realm are living extraordinary times. Alternatives almost unimaginable fifteen years ago are being articulated. A new sense of a can do or of a why not is like a sociological equivalent of a huge sigh that a new quality to life of life may yet cauterise our societies north and south of the border and my remarks are going to connect with the exchange that we have hired between your General Secretary and the Taoiseach and I would be very honoured if I could add anything to equality of what was said.

Social advance does not drop on society after sound economic performance. There can be a much improved quality of work and life for everyone north and south but only if ideologies of every sort take second place to clear analysis of what the actual people who make up our societies need and value. And only if the social policy options are set out creatively and honestly discussed.

And finally only if the necessary political choices and decisions are made in a timely and courageous fashion the National Economic and Social Council, which has been referred to several times already, has been engaged for the last two years with a process that had at least some of these features. It set out two years ago to seek to learn from what had happened in the economic field in the Republic of Ireland and in particular the role the Irish state had played in transforming the economic functions of the Irish Republic. In order to apply the lesson to the countries welfare state it wanted some of the same determination and focus that the social partners had brought to tackling the death crisis and the unemployment crisis to be brought to bear on strengthening social cohesion and improving social protection in this 21st Century. And the first result of this deliberation by the NESC, by the Republic of Ireland social partners is a report published last month and entitled – 'The Developmental Welfare State'. And what I really want to do in the time remaining is to draw your attention to some of its core perspectives and conclusions.

The conviction has grown among the social partners that the distinction between policies that economic or social is beginning to loose its usefulness in the conditions and circumstances facing a small open society like the Republic of Ireland today. Economic policies that deliver and sustain high levels of decent employment are profoundly social. While social policies that underpin social

cohesion and procure social inclusion confer profound economic advantages. So a core thesis in the council's new report is this – that sound economic performance is a profoundly social achievement and brings solid social progress. It occurs only in a social context and it reflects the values and social institutions that support it. You may ask yourselves then have we had sound economic performance in the Republic of Ireland. And I'd like to select just some of the evidence that's presented in the councils report. (that second slide, thanks)

This is from an OECD review of job creation across the industrialised world. It takes just a little moment to observe. Job creations in three types of job are shown with different bar. In 1996 the OECD economists simply grouped all the employment in the nations here shown into three groups, those that were high paying, medium paying and lower paying and it plotted the growth in employment in each category over the period 1993 to 2001. And I've selected this chart because it shows the extraordinarily balanced surge in employment that the Republic of Ireland experienced during its Celtic Tiger period. The large light blue bar, Ireland as you see is on the far right because we outshone, we out performed, every other country in the OECD world during the decade of the 1990's. We out performed most notably in the expansion of jobs that are high paying; however the interest of this chart is that we also out performed most other countries in jobs that are medium paid and in jobs that are lower paid employing that the expanding Irish economy has offered opportunity to people at each level of the educational ladder. Contrast the pattern in the job growth in the Republic of Ireland with what you see there for the Netherlands or for the United Kingdom. In both countries the growth in jobs that are relatively low paying exceeded growth in jobs that are medium or high paying. This balance nature to growth is why today we have not just more financial analysts and IT specialists but we have more people working in our catering sector, in our call centres and in everywhere else.

A second result or dimension to what we have experienced in the foreground in the last fifteen years to which I want to draw your attention is this – Ireland has grown the incomes of people in its poorest households since the mid 1990's at a rate and in a way not matched by only matched by two other countries in the rich world, Norway and Switzerland. This chart shows the growth in real disposable income per person at first for the highest 20% of households, for the great 60% in the middle and for the lowest 10% of households. And what is quiet remarkable here is when we compare ourselves with Sweden for example, in Sweden we see the yellow, that the Swedes since the mid 1990's have seen regressive development in income distribution as the income in the richest 20% of Swedish households have grown faster than in the great middle or in the lowest 20%. The pattern of evolution in incomes in Ireland is not replicated in any other OECD country. We have seen this phenomenal surge in real take home incomes per person in the middle 60% of the population. We have seen a marginally high growth in real take home pay per person in the top 20% and growth in the real take home per person incomes in the lowest 20% that is well over approximately

four times what has been experienced by the lowest 20% of households in Sweden.

Now I was particularly keen to show you that because we are frequently reminded of the very stunning poverty figures for Ireland that we have such a large proportion of our population living on less than 60% of median equalised disposable income. We need constantly to balance that with the realisation that one of the main reasons that that is so is that despite steady growth in incomes in the lowest households the median in Ireland has been growing phenomenally. Since 1994 to 2003 the benchmark that we use to classify who remains below the income poverty lines has risen by a factor of 2.4.

The report contains further instances of where Ireland has been investing, the Taoiseach drew your attention to that, has been investing steadily larger resources in different forms of social protection. Let me just cite one interesting statistic in the report, that investment in real terms in the health in Ireland has grown by 11.4% a year since 1998, the fastest growth by far of all OECD countries. Am I labouring the social that is in the economic if I'm doing so it's in order to highlight the unique path that Ireland has forged to its current economic prosperity? The surge in employment in the Republic of Ireland took place without a collapse in real wages at the bottom of the ladder as occurred in the United States, without social welfare being cut or restricted, in fact welfare rates and coverage improved, without a widening of the wage dispersion, it remained broadly the same as skilled inward migration dampened growth, dampened growth. *(Tape finishes text missing)*...out public sector pay being allowed to lag pay in the private sector. Some economists think that last should not have happened during a boom led by the private sector and they're even surprised that lowest paid in the public sector earn more than the lowest paid in the private sector. They totally missed the point that Ireland's economic performance has been sustained partly because of the solidaristic elements in national wage settlements rather than despite them. In terms of similar purchasing power and there is a percentage of average earnings Ireland's minimum wage is one of the highest in the European Union while the tax take out of low earnings is one of the smallest in the entire industrialised world. These developments have not occurred on a neo-liberal watch. Ireland's model of social partnership and the sustained engagement of Congress with the process deserve much of the credit. Underlining these social achievements of Ireland's labour market is not to distract from real challenges that continue to face it, or failure eloquently highlighted this Conference to extend equal conditions and protection to all migrant workers, or failure to address the benefit traps and deficits in hard and soft skills that keep a significant number of people reliant on social welfare in the midst of the greatest employment expansion our country has known. Our failure to provide women in particular with the support services that enable them to take jobs more in keeping with their educational attainment. Or failure to develop the training programmes that affect re positioned workers threatened with redundancy.

But NESC is convinced that the determination and energy to tackle those challenges should come from appreciating what has been achieved and how. The evidence to date is that we are far from becoming the 51st state of the United States or engaging in a race to the bottom. It could happen, it has not, and the reason is the price is eternal vigilance and the reason is the partnership process that we have taken to our current economic prosperity.

In similar vain looking forward, the successful pursuit of current economic objectives has inherent social implications that will directly serve social justice and create a more egalitarian society. For example, pushing the employment rates higher employs that requires that we focus attention now on hitherto neglected groups in our working age population. The obstacles they face and the supports that they need. Raising skill levels will enhance more people's standard of living, their work satisfaction and the degree of control that they have over their working environment. Concentrating on life long learning implies giving increased attention to people at work and not assuming that public support for learning ends once youth is over. Seeking flexibility in the workplace requires a deeper appreciation of the worker as an agent of change rather than a reluctant subject compelled by cleverly designed supervision and reward systems to behave in a way that management can predict. Protecting workers from the effects of industrial and company restructuring should be just that, protection of the worker and not in the first place of an industry or of a company.

The council's reflection on the welfare state that Ireland needs advocates an interaction between a welfare state that is more generous with the more systematic engagement of people with the services from childcare through to education and training that enable them to progress and not remain indefinitely on social assistance payments. This is a model, sometimes termed 'flexicurity' of which Denmark is currently regarded as the core example. Denmark in most of its social welfare payments has replacement rates that are far higher than in Ireland but the reason most Danes are not settling down to a type of demise life or twilight existence on social assistance is because their payment arrangements are much more structured with service providers and enable the person to re-skill, to re-position, to re-enter employment. Looking forward NESC is convinced that the core source of competitive and economic advantage in the future would be the quality of social protection extended to our population. It instances several types of social spending, where it is simply foolish to call it a cost that risks damaging the economy's competitiveness. For example, services that support children, excuse me, that support people in their caring responsibilities for family members, help them maintain an attachment to the work force and to avoid long absences from work which during which their skills deteriorate. Eliminating childhood poverty will enable children to benefit more from schooling, increase their employability and productivity when they reach working age and reduce spending on means tested social benefits on their behalf when they're adults. Stemming educational disadvantage among young people and the adult population will increase people's employability and productivity and

strengthen their attachment to the world of work. NESC sees major social achievements inherent in our attainment of near full employment. It also sees major deficiencies however in how our current welfare state is protecting our population. Despite a huge increase in spending on child income support an unacceptably high number of children are remaining below the income poverty line. It wants child income support to be more targeted. Welfare receipt for a large number of people of working age is of unacceptably long duration, NESC wants social assistance payments to be shorn of all vestiges of being exclusion wages and linked to progression pathways. People reliant on social welfare pensions are slipping further and further behind the prevailing incomes in Ireland today. NESC wants the social welfare pension improved and access to it made easier. And that's just on the income front. It also questions the effectiveness of many of the special measures that have been taken to tackle educational disadvantage, end homelessness, promote disadvantaged areas, improve the quality of life for travellers, stem drug abuse and generally secure social inclusion. It doesn't use this term but it suggests that many of our special initiatives for these categories of need are more like potholes than black holes. It's not so much that we're devoting huge resources to them, it's that every time we seem to fill the hole and we come along two or three years later a subsidence has taken place and we still have high levels of school leaving in disadvantaged areas. We still have our travelling, our traveller community with extraordinarily poor health outcomes and so on. It argues that what we are doing a lot of we are not doing particularly well, we're not learning sufficiently, effectively about what works and why. And it caused for new transparency in return for more secure funding to the many local and community initiatives and seeks to promote much more vigorous participation in learning networks.

In adopting its strategies for Ireland's welfare state NESC in fact came to be clear that we must not assume that social spending is a cost. That the private sector is more efficient than the public sector or that the European model is sclerotic. But NESC is also clear that social spending has to assume its appropriate responsibility for sound economic performance, that radical changes are needed if public services are to remain the choice of citizens who have private alternatives. And the mixed character of Ireland's welfare state is now a potential strength rather than disadvantage as it faces the challenges of globalisation, aging and a more demanding public.

The report which you can access on NESC's website or I will post it to you from NESC's secretariat outlines this basic architecture as required by Ireland's welfare state as it faces the challenges of the future. NESC discussed at length the attractions of the Nordic states, the developments in continental Europe and of course the changes taking place in this Anglo Saxon world. It came to the conclusion that there are learning aspects, there are lessons to be learned in the reform that is on the way within each of these welfare families, that Ireland as in its pursuit of economic progress should forge its own route to the welfare state that the population needs.

And I want to end just by developing a few points on what NESC has had to say about services; so I'm skipping its views on income, research and development to focus just on what it terms the services dividend to Ireland's strong economic performance. It is unequivocal in stating that a radical development of services is the single most important route to improving social protection for Ireland's population in the years ahead. It is critical to securing social inclusion, to fostering social cohesion and to sustaining our economic performance. Now it does voice observations that may strike a discordant note with this audience. Services that are publicly funded states do not have to be publicly provided. Public service is not the monopoly of the public sector. However while it makes those observations NESC is not endorsing privatisation. In the first place the statements I have just quoted are observations of how we started. A colonised society could not and did not wait on the state to develop institutions of social protection in Ireland. As a direct result, our welfare state today relies on a wide variety of third parties to deliver social protection that the tax payer funds in total or in part. To take just two prominent examples, the public voluntary hospitals and most schools are not owned by the state and their management boards cannot and will not be treated by department officials although they were lying civil servants. Into this picture come commercial providers the private sector, but the highest level challenge to the state remains the same whether the service provider is public, an NGO or private. Namely how to ensure that its citizens receive standards on a needs basis and regardless of income, that public funds are used transparently, that outcomes and services are clearly focused and opportunities to improve service provision are grasped. If the regulatory monitoring and development functions of the state were infinitely good it probably wouldn't matter to the citizen who the service provider is but the Leas Cross Nursing Home shows us that such functions of the state are not infinitely good. NESC underlines the advantages to public sector provision. Public sector providers it states can be characterised by low transaction costs, there is less need for regulators, equitable access, good working conditions, high levels of staff commitment and strong public trust. It quotes a United Kingdom study which reflected that in many public services citizens value not only the service received by themselves but the services received by others, in other words fair distribution of itself creates value. That is the type of public sector which NESC regards as integral to the welfare state which it is advocating. It would provide services this public sector for quality and responsiveness that would bring citizens you could purchase private sector alternatives to choose the public provider instead. It would set standards which non profit and for profitable providers would be challenged to meet. It would be well resourced because tax payers would know that improvements in equity or effectiveness could not be got by reallocating resources to another sector. NESC in fact specifically seeks to avoid a scenario in which citizens with better incomes drift away from reliance on public sector provision believing for example that they can get better education for their children or health cover from their families from private sources. Such a deepening of the dualism already present in our service systems risks

residualising public sector providers. This would heighten the association between social advantage and reliance on public services to the detriment of social cohesion and social inclusion.

In conclusion, NESC proposes a new architecture and core strategy for Ireland's welfare state. This would support people in work much more effectively, principally through services. This would revamp arrangements for social protection that embody low expectations and assume unnecessarily that people's social disadvantage is fixed. This would raise standards in every type of institutional care for people whose health, age, severity of disability or other circumstances make even a degree of self reliance unattainable. And finally this welfare state would express and institutionalise genuine and respectable inter-dependence between the several pillars and multiple actors among whom collaboration is indispensable if the required high levels of social protection across our society are to be forthcoming. For much of Ireland's independence during the 20th century NESC notes people where it's greatest asset but only literary, religious and political discourse. There was little proof of that in the economic and social realities of the time, the welfare state to which it points it believes will bring Ireland to actually treat people as its greatest asset. Thank you for your patience and attention.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you John for your contribution. I'd like to call Kay Garvey, whose chairperson of Standing Orders. Standing Orders Report Number 5.

Kay Garvey, Chairperson Standing Orders Committee

Mr President, delegates, Standing Orders Report Number 5. The Standing Orders Committee has met and is concerned at how far behind we have fallen in the business of Conference so the decision is that the movers of resolutions will be limited to three minutes, seconders and speakers to one minute. Standing Orders Committee will review progress later today and may have to place further restrictions and we are asking the co-operation of everybody to ensure that the business of Conference is completed and I should say that the Executive movers of reports will be restricted to five minutes. Ok thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

That agreed.....Ok.

Conference, before we conclude just a few notices, the SIPTU delegates assemble at the back of the hall now for a briefing. Also there is a 'Workplace of the Future' which is being run by the National Centre for Partnership Performance and Equal Community Initiative which is, I think its being held here in the Waterfront studio.

Conference, when we return we'll have to, we'll be starting off with the emergency motion which is being tabled by AMICUS and then we'll be continuing with business and after we come down to the finishing the debate on 51 we'll be coming back to conclude those motions which we missed yesterday. Ok?

Thank you Conference, back here at 2.30.

Lunch Adjournment

Thursday 23 June 2005

Quality of Work

14.30 – 16.30

(Motions 26 – 31)

(Motions 50 – 72)

**(Principal EC Report reference: Section 3, Chapter 1
“Representation and Dispute Resolution”. Section 3, Chapter 3
“Securing New Rights at Work”. Section 3, Chapter 2 “Improving
Working Conditions”)**

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Conference can you take your seats please.

Kay.

Can I call movers from AMICUS on the emergency motion?

Brian Gallagher, AMICUS

President, Brian Gallagher, AMICUS moving emergency motion.

The Voluntary Health Insurance Act 1994 incorporated the principle of community rating and the manner in which it was to be implemented including risk equalisation. This measure was introduced to ensure that new competitors to the health market would not be permitted to cherry pick the youngest and healthiest customers leaving the existing insurer the highest risk, highest cost sectors of the market. Our union was consulted by Government prior to the introduction of the legislation and we were assured that the principle of community rating and risk equalisation were protected in a watertight manner. It did not turn out like that. Legislation is only effective if it is implemented. Risk equalisation was not implemented because the regulatory body responsible for making the necessary recommendations to the minister failed to do so and because successive ministers for health turned a blind eye to their negligence or because of the ideological bias. It is clear that there are very powerful vested interests who want to undermine community rating and open the market to a free for all where private operators cream off huge profits with minimum risks or costs

and the existing insurer is left to either face bankruptcy or ultimately abandoning community rating. Delegates, these vested interests will tell you that we are proposing the implementation of risk equalisation to protect the state body or to protect state employees; nothing could be further from the truth. The VHI and its employees will flourish whether risk equalisation is introduced or not. The people who will loose are the 80% of our members who because of the fact that there is no quality free at the point of delivery healthcare system because of the failure of successive governments to fund it will not be able to access it. Ponder this, because I'm running out of time, a 42 year old today, who is a member of a health insurer - if community rating goes their premium goes up seven fold. If you are sixty you simply cannot afford it. We have a principle in pensions and also in health insurance of intergenerational support where the younger support the older. We cannot afford to let that go. It is a yardstick that we must judge this government by on their social contract and social policy, if they fail us now we must hold them to account. I urge Conference to support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Got a seconder? Formally seconds. Put that motion to Congress. Who's in support please show, who's against, abstained, unanimous.

Like to move to introduce our guest speaker Madeline Bunting,

David Begg, Congress General Secretary.

Colleagues, I would introduce our guest speaker by saying that I have a friend who reads the Telegraph newspaper because he said he doesn't want to reinforce his prejudice. I on the other hand am inclined to read the Guardian Newspaper specifically to reinforce my prejudice and when I read the Guardian Newspaper the person that I read most avidly is Madeline Bunting and her column. She is also the author of a book which I commend to anybody who is interested in 'quality of life' issues, it's called 'Willing Slaves' and it documents exactly the pressures that people in Britain are facing today in terms of their participation in the labour force. She also, coined a phrase I think that struck me very forcefully on one occasion speaking about the media when she said as far as the media are concerned there are only two trade union stories: strikes and splits. So we are trying to change that agenda and get it on to other subjects so there is no better person I think to deal with the theme of our Conference this week than Madeline Bunting.

Address to Conference Madeline Bunting

Author and Guardian Newspaper Columnist

Thank you very much for that very kind introduction and thank you also for inviting me to come here which I am absolutely delighted to be doing. I think that the theme of your Conference is exactly what I had in my mind when I sat down to write the book - 'Willing Slaves', and I want to tell you a little bit about why I decided to write that book, what I discovered as I wrote it and why I think this is an issue which is absolutely essential that the trade union movement promotes inter public debate. One of the things that I found very disturbing really was that the quality of work barely featured as a issue on the British public agenda. It's very, very hard to have a conversation about what actually takes up a huge amount of our time, our daily lives and has such an enormous effect on our lives. But one of the things that I did discover was that when I started writing about work in my Guardian column about five or six years ago was one issue that was always guaranteed to get me a huge response from readers and that was the issue of work life balance and I realise that I kind of likened it to some sort of burst water mane. Whenever I touched on this issue I would just get such an enormous response from readers I began to think that there was something going on here that needed more careful thought, a deeper sort of probing and analysis. What I feel is going on is that there some sort of vague sense of our needs about our working lives which people find very hard to get a grasp of. There was one very poignant email that was sent to me from Devon from somebody who said "I love my job there nothing wrong with the work that I do, I find it interesting, rewarding the problem is I just can't keep up. More and more of the time I'm having to say no to my family, no to other activities and even then I can't keep up with the pressures of my work". That was an email that sent me off looking into this issue, and what I discovered in the UK is that there has been a deterioration in the quality of work life across a huge range of indicators and particularly in the 1990's. So over the course of a decade what you saw was a sense of growing of dissatisfaction in the British workforce about almost every aspect over their jobs. The sense of control of the hours they worked, the amount of time they had to put into their work, the amount of energy they had to put into their work their sense of autonomy at work their relationship with their bosses. I think many of those aspects of the British work condition may well be true here in Ireland and certainly I think a sense of what Ireland must be sure to guard against because the thing about the British models is that we seem very keen to promote our version of labour market flexibility across the EU I thinks it's very, very important that you understand something about dissatisfaction that provokes within the UK. So what I want to start by doing is just telling you what I understand by the overwork culture. That was the title of my book 'The Overwork Culture is Ruining our Lives', and there is one obvious aspect to it and that is the amount of time and perhaps some of you are familiar with the fact that Britain works the longest hours in Europe it has the least number of holidays and has the largest proportion of long hour workers in Europe. If you add up our weekly hours and our holidays, we are working 8 weeks more a year than the average French man or German or Italian. Nor is this getting better, between 1998 and

2003 the number of people working over 60 hours a week in the UK increased by a third and here's one key statistic one fifth of workers between 30 and 39 years old are working more than 60 hours a week in the UK. I think that is a very, very important fact and I want you to just keep that in your mind because it absolutely crucial to the argument I am going to pick up in a moment. But this isn't just a simple matter of measuring time in and time out there's another aspect to the overwork culture which is work intensification. When I first came across this concept it was like so many things slotted into place so that the worker that emailed me, in the course of writing my book I interviewed all sorts of workers in all sorts of situations in the British labour market and what again I heard from all kinds of workers was not the hours it's how hard I have to work in those hours so I might be doing a 9 to 5 job but I come home absolutely exhausted. Work intensification is crucial to understanding what has happened to jobs in the last 10 15 years and I think there's many, many aspects to that. One is that workloads have increased, you're expected to do far more. One is that information technology has been used to accelerate the process of work so when I talk to salt packers in a Derbyshire factory over the course of 20 years that some of those people have been working there, they could describe for me very, very clearly the process of work intensification. The way in which now the assembly line never stopped, not for 24 hours 7 never stopped. The whole culture about when you could take breaks, how you could take breaks the pauses in the routine and rhythm of work had they been eliminated into a slow not even slow a steady continuous stream of work. That's one aspect of work intensification another aspect which I think we need to be far, far more aware of is emotional labour, I think in many, many service industries what employees are being asked to provide is hard work in terms of unfailing patience always obliging always responding to the customer as if the customer is right, that constant even-tempered cheerfulness.

What I find very interesting is how often that gets dismissed, oh well that's normal, that's just being yourself, it isn't. It's a very conscious creation you have to make yourself like that and increasingly employers are looking for the kinds of employees who will make themselves like that, cheerful, obliging no matter what is thrown at them and I think there's a terrible lopsidedness in the relationships generated in a service economy, the customer is always king which means presumably those working in service industries are always the pages, they're always the servants. Now that generates I think a lot of difficulty for people who understandably respect themselves have a sense on individualism they've grown up in democratic culture, we're talking about something that's very counter cultural and I think that makes it a very difficult kind of labour. So that's the overwork culture and I think it is draining a lot of people of an enormous amount of physical, mental and emotional resources. One very, very interesting strand of my research was the number of people who said that the organisations they worked in required such an enormous amount of emotional work in terms of building up teams, in terms of motivating people in terms of persuading, cajoling what many women said to me is that the kind of work I provide in the office I simply can't do

at home, the emotional management of the family has to be shelved, I simply can't do both it's too demanding. 36% of the British workforce say that by the end of a day at work they are so exhausted that they can do nothing but slump on a sofa. So what's driving this famous Anglo-Saxon model of exhaustion, there are four key factors I will pick out, I am going have to sketch it out quite simply, some of them obvious, globalisation a race to the bottom, there are structural reasons in the British economy why time is cheap at both the low end of the labour market and the top end of the labour market. Unpaid overtime which is what a large proportion of the British workforce routinely put into their jobs is extremely cheap and I think it is one of the extraordinary achievements of capitalism that has been able to motivate such an unbelievable quantity of unpaid overtime and at the bottom of the labour market cheap labour is cheap, you can use large quantities of it. People on low wages are forced to work very long hours as I know Barbara Ehrenreich has been talking to you earlier in this week and as she exposed in her brilliant book which was a great source of inspiration for me. But I want to pick three other factors out which are also overdriving the overwork culture and which I think have had a little less recognition is information technology. One of the things is I think we have been hoodwinked by a set of technology companies that have promised technology will our lives easier. I would be happy to be corrected but I have yet to find anybody that says information technology has made their job easier. First time I've been clapped for that comment. The thing about information technology is it may make you more effective at your job, you may be able to do more with your job but it certainly makes your job more demanding, more difficult and accelerates the pace and I still think we need to wake up from the sort of dazzle that large technology corporations have paid huge amounts to advertising companies to convince us over the last ten years that information technology will be a good thing it's both good and bad. The next thing I want to highlight is new types of organisational structures so called flat organisations. I think what many to the new type of corporations, and I've looked at a number of them in the UK, corporations like Asda try to engineer a high commitment they try to engineer a corporate culture where you want to put in that extra effort and it's very, very clever and very interesting how they do it. They do it with all sorts of praise all sorts of leagues for achieving this being the best shop on that being the best worker on that but I think we need to raise a lot of questions about in what way they are motivating people, why people find themselves drawn into cultures which require eighteen hour days which what a typical Asda shop manager will put in. The last thing I want to highlight in terms of the factors driving our overwork culture has been very, very evident in the public sector in the UK and this a frustration for me because this government in the UK has talked a lot about work life balance and yet it's been the hardest taskmaster. The deterioration of working life in the UK is as much about the public as it is about the private sector, what all kinds of public servants in the UK talk about, whether it's in local government, in nursing, in education is a huge amount of overwork generated by the audit culture, by bureaucracy, by testing, by measuring. Some local government official said to me, they probably spent half of their time, exactly the

amount of time they could be putting into getting the job right they spend half the time dealing with inspection teams with different parts of government filling in forms to say they've done everything they're supposed to do, responding to the targets they are constantly being set. Okay so what does it matter, that's a question that's pretty obvious to a trade union movement but I really want to press an analogy home which I think is really crucial. In the late 60's early 1970's environmentalists began to talk about how you can't pollute rivers, you can't just throw pollution into the air you have to talk about environmental sustainability. At the time people thought this was a rather peculiar idea, they didn't quite grasp why it was important, couldn't you just ruin the water supply ruin the air quality for free well I think the issue we've got to start addressing now, what we have to get our head around now is human sustainability and it's just as much of a leap for the imagination to understand this as environmental sustainability was a generation ago. Because the kind of work cultures being generated in America, Britain, Australia, New Zealand they all have the same characteristics they all have adopted the same type of Anglo-Saxon economic model, and they all have the same consequences. I am going to pick out two particular types of aspects of human sustainability that I think need to be at the top of your quality of work quality life agenda. The first is that we have a care deficit and the care deficit is evident very, very clearly primarily in care of the self. Stress, it's very easy to protect yourself from stress, we have now got a large body of research into stress which tells us that there are protectors that you can now, if you manage to look after yourself in certain key areas you will protect yourself from stress. Three of the key protectors from stress are friendship, exercise and hobbies. It comes as no surprise then that if nearly 40% of the UK workforce are too exhausted to do anything at the end of their day at work than to slump on a sofa it's no surprise then the stress statistics in the UK have soared, people do not have the time and they certainly do not have the energy to be sure to maintain those kind protector factors against stress. 20% of the British workforce say that their work is very or extremely stressful and work has now overtaken any other cause such as money or family as the key cause of stress in the UK. For the incidence of stress has doubled in a decade and in the UK the irony is that we now lose more days at work to stress than we did to strike action in the late 70's. In past columns I've written and said this proved a sort of pyrrhic victory, Thatcher's conquest over the trade unions in the UK what she did is smash the trade union movement, brought strike action right down but the result is, a generation on, the people instead of joining a trade union and trying to improve their working conditions they drop out, they fall sick with stress, take sick leave and time off work. So I would say that one of the really most pressing issues is that issue of how do we keep ourselves going, the resilience of human nature which is absolutely critical to good workers and it seems to me critical to the interest of employers as well as an issue at the heart of trade union concerns. Also related to this the relationships that most suffers from overwork, now this is a very interesting one because people often think it's children, there's a great debate about we're not bringing our children up properly but I think that's slightly distorted when you look at the statistics and the time studies over the last 20/30

years about how people spend their time, it's very, very interesting how much effort people are making to protect their children from the overwork culture. In fact a full-time working mother now is spending more time with her school-age children than she did in the 60's, interesting but true. That's why when we have various newspapers who lambaste working mothers I think it's completely the wrong target. So it's not children who are suffering from the overwork culture as much as the relationship the key primary relationship between the partners, husband and wife or cohabitees. All the evidence in all the research shows the relationship which suffers the worst is the relationship with your partner, your long-term partner and that clearly has knock-on consequences on children. So we are beginning to see how the care deficit is undermining key sources of resilience and human sustainability. Now that would be bad enough but I think the problem that makes it acute is that the overwork culture is coinciding with an historic redefinition of the role of women, women are now increasingly going out to work and the problem is they're having to subscribe to the male work ethic the result is we've got a combination which I think is truly dangerous in terms of the wellbeing of everybody. So what I argue is that what we need alongside a work ethic is a care ethic. We should be talking about a care ethic just as much as a work ethic, the vital ingredient of the wellbeing of the human being is the quality of their relationships of care, of how they fulfil their obligations to those that are dependent on them and how they find their needs met by those who they love. The politics of care will become a major issue in the next two decades. We are going to have to start thinking about something that we've always assumed women will just do. The care economy has never been measured, it's never been valued until now when it's beginning to fall apart. So who cares for who? And why? And who pays? Already these issues are on the UK political agenda and in the response to my book I was surprised by the degree of interest from Ireland. I got as much interest from Irish media as I did from British media about the issues I was raising, it seems to me this is an issue absolutely central to the Irish public agenda as well. The reason why this is going to become acute in the UK is because we've got an increasingly elderly population, we've got an increasing number of people who are trying to balance their children, responsibilities to their children and responsibilities to their parents, so what we have to do is re-shape the work ethic. The idea, which is a Victorian idea of single-minded commitment to your work entirely free of domestic family responsibilities is over. It was an ethic that survived that was necessary arguably for industrialisation a period of 200 years, it is simply totally inappropriate for a working culture, where men and women are both balancing work and care. So there's a huge historic shift here that has to happen and the problem is it's being crippled by the overwork culture. How do we get into a position where all of us work and care in the right kinds of proportions that we want, that is the key question and it may involve the right to request flexible work which we now have in the UK certainly involves maternity and paternity leave in all these ways we have to rethink the way in which we work.

Finally, what are the chances of this happening every time I talk about this people always come back to me and say, 'well it sounds great but it's all a bit optimistic it's a bit utopian isn't it'. I think there's a tremendous sense of fear, anxiety and insecurity about globalisation, if don't work all hours that God gives me then wont the job go to the Far East, and I think we need to stand up to that fear and say 'no', in fact many of the jobs in the UK will never go to the Far East because those jobs are often in the public sector, they're teaching, they're nursing we can't outsource all of our jobs. In fact the proportion of our jobs that can be outsourced is very small so the causes of fear need to be challenged. There's one thing that gives me a lot of hope in UK about how this reshaped work ethic could be campaigned for, could be achieved. I think we are approaching a point in the UK where the demographic are all coming together in the right way. What we've got is a younger generation much smaller, our birth rate has been in decline, who are going to be in a much stronger position to negotiate a decent deal in the labour market. This a generation who might just say, I just don't want a good quality of life I also want a good quality of work and that is the key shift in the agenda that is required. Why is it that we put all of our aspirations into consumption instead of into work, why don't we be as demanding workers as we are demanding consumers. So I'm hopeful of that generation, will make that shift and there will be an interesting generational alliance because in the UK we have a lot of discussion and debate about how we'll have to stay working for longer. People in their 60's up right possibly to 70 have to continue working and what the evidence seems to indicate is that people are quite happy to carry on working they think that's okay but with one major caveat, they can't keep working at the same pace, what they want is a reshaped work ethic. So I think there is a possibility here where you get two constituencies within the labour market wanting the same thing. The idea that a fifth, remember that figure I told you in the beginning, a fifth of all 30-39 year olds are working more that sixty hours a week, you simply can't form a family in that kind of work culture which is going to be strong and resilient in which both men and women can participate in the labour market. 30-39 is the key years for having children, if you create a working culture in which a large proportion of the best jobs require 60 hour weeks, you cut women out, there is a gender equality issue her. So there is a big task ahead I don't under estimate that for a moment but I think it's absolutely vital that we reshape the work ethic, not to fit the interest and aims of market capitalism but to put human sustainability at its hear. Thanks very much.

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Brendan Mackin, President of Congress

Madeline I think for us in the trade union movement, you've certainly given us food for thought and we certainly would agree on the basis of reshaping working life and more family friendly policies be put into place and thank you very much.

Can I move to the Section three, Chapter one, Peter Bunting

Peter Bunting, Congress Assistant General Secretary

Presidents, comrades chapters one, two and three of section three of the Executive Council Report contain a record of the industrial work undertaken by Congress in 2003 and 2004. It is very difficult in a report of that nature to give a full account of all the activity undertaken and it's even more difficult that due to the time constraint imposed on me by the President and indeed the Standing Orders Committee and therefore I just briefly mention a small number of issues. The first one is was that since its enactment the Industrial Relations Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2004 agreed in *Sustaining Progress* has been used to the benefit of a large number of workers. At the time the Executive Council Report was being compiled over ninety cases had been referred under these new procedures. Many of these cases have resulted in improved conditions of employment for workers and trade union members. However, the passing of the Act has also met with some controversy, our old foe Michael O'Leary the alleged champion of the passenger has sought to use the considerable means at his disposal to undermine the legislation and the attempts by IMPACT to seek to represent their members. The next stage in that particular battle with O'Leary will be determined by the outcome of judicial review procedures taken by Ryanair. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the bravery shown by John Goss who stood up to O'Leary's attempts to bully and intimidate him. If Congress did award medals for courage I'm sure the President would be pinning one on John Goss today and in that particular vein I'm just going to mention two other issues because I think they were extremely important and the role in it played by trade union movement was very, very significant and one is the Gama debacle in which much comment has already been aired here at this Conference but I would just like to record our appreciation to the number of people who were involved in that because it does display that the protection that the trade union movement and organised labour can give to those workers would be exploited so I want to record our appreciation to the Construction Industry Committee to Noel Dowling and Eric Fleming of SIPTU and also Deputy Joe Higgins TD as well. I suppose one of the other significant features of our work over the last two years has been the major improvement of the quality of the work environment following introduction of the smoking ban due again in no small part to this movement and I record our appreciation here to Jim Maloney the Mandate official representing bar workers who regretfully died quite recently but lived long enough to see his dream of a smoke free workplace realised. And in my address yesterday when I was dealing with Northern Ireland I referred to many industrial relations matters in Northern Ireland so I don't intend to repeat those today. Just to conclude President I would like to thank all my colleagues in the industrial office, Fergus, Liam, Mary and young Gareth as well and thank them for their help and assistance to me over the last two years and I commend the report to Conference.

Marie Levis, IMPACT

Marie Levis, Impact speaking to Executive Council Report section on representation and dispute resolution specifically the review of the employment rights bodies.

The Labour Court's mission is to find a basis for real and substantial agreement between the provision of fast, fair, informal and inexpensive arrangements for the adjudication and resolution of industrial disputes. Unfortunately for my own and my colleagues experience the inadequate resourcing of the court means that it cannot realise its stated mission specifically of providing a fast service or experiences long delays in getting to the court. We have many examples, just one will give you a flavour. I refer the case concerning 350 members last November to the court the hearing took place last week, seven months of a delay. Or experience with a Rights Commissioner's service is similar, it is not unusual to wait for even longer. In Cork city and county the largest county in the republic members can expect to wait on average in excess of eight months before having their case heard. This is due to one Rights Commissioner in the region the Commissioner also covers Kerry and Limerick. How can he provide a timely service? We also experience delays in recommendations being issued, four month delays are not unheard of. One of my colleagues referred an age discrimination case to the Equality Tribunal, he waited two years for a hearing it was held in October, he still hasn't got a finding. Our members feel more and more frustrated by a system that we continue to promote. We call on Congress to prioritise and drive forward the restructuring and proper resourcing of the entire industrial relations and employment rights bodies. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, President

Thank you.

Eimer O'Shea, IMPACT

Eimer O'Shea, IMPACT also speaking to the Executive Council Report.

Just to comment delegates on the way we do our business, I was alarmed to read in the most recent Annual Report of the Equality Tribunal the extent at which complainants to the Tribunal are relying on legal and opposed to trade union representation. It is an increasing trend particularly when cases go on to the Labour Court. I suggest we need to review of where somehow complicit in that move away from trade union representation and towards the legal eagles. Congress and the Executive need to proactively arrest this marginalisation of trade unions in the equality arena. In his address on Tuesday on Trade Union

Recruitment Peter McLoone stressed the need for us to operate with each other rather than compete against each other. This I think is especially pertinent in the equality arena and can be driven by Congress. We need in a structured way to pool the expertise on equality that is there amongst us, currently we have ad hoc informal networks, we need to build on them and cooperate with each other across unions. We must share our experiences of the tribunal, good and bad let's pool our trade union expertise and restore confidence in our ability and capacity to represent workers in the equality arena. Thank you

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Just to remind colleagues that motion 50 and motion 51 are both ruled out of order and within Standing Orders report No. 1. As I said I want to move to motions that were omitted yesterday which are motions 26-31. I'm taking number 31 first because the delegate in question has to catch a plane because he's going to a family wedding somewhere so we always want to facilitate family friendly policies don't we. Can I ask the movers of motions 26 and 27 to start moving down towards the front please.

Michael Bride, CWU

Thanks President, Conference, Michael Bride, CWU proposing motion 31. I've arranged incidentally for a copy of my plane ticket to be displayed behind me as I'm speaking just in case anyone has any doubts. As the text of the motion points out regulatory bodies have become evermore powerful at the same time there has been a shift away from a multidimensional approach within regulation and competition and policy towards a more one dimensional approach whereby the consumer is considered king above all other stakeholders. This is evidenced best by the change in the Competition Act 2000 where the previous Competition Act of 1991 had in it a section whereby the Competition Authority could look at the effect on industry employment before making ruling so in other words if a merger or acquisition was going to lead to 3,000 job losses it could be blocked on that basis. The new Competition Act of 2000 removed that and now all that matter is the consumer and other stakeholders are put by the wayside. Equally in Telecom regulation prices are determined without any regard whatsoever for the sustainable employment and most recently and more worryingly in the postal sector we have a senior manager in An Post denying workers their money which they are legitimately owed and one of the pivotal reasons they're offering is that the regulator has not approved a price increase so more and more regulation is having a bearing. However, there's also a wider perspective Government and regulatory bodies across Europe are putting the consumer first right across the way and they should realise that when the consumer puts on a uniform and puts

on a tie and goes to work that consumer becomes a worker and of all times both the consumer and the worker are also citizens of the state and regulatory policy being pursued is anti-worker. The sentiments expressed in motion 31 seek to redress this balance. There is a wider question as well colleagues which the President himself addressed in his opening remarks at the start of Conference and it's this, Do we want a society which blindly serves the economy or do we want an economy which will deliver to us the kind of society to which should aspire. If it's the latter vision you favour colleagues I urge you to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconders

President, Billy Hannigan, PSEU seconding the motion which as Michael says deals with the role of the many regulatory bodies and seeks the establishment of a commission on regulation which would oversee the implementation of regulatory policy. Now delegates, bodies such as the commission for the communications regulator or the commission for energy regulation or the aviation regulator have been having a significant impact on the businesses that operate under their remit and by extension are having an impact on employment and on conditions of employment of the people employed in these businesses. The manner in which these bodies conduct their affairs often appears to ignore public policy on employment, the provisions of national programmes on which we give the direction on which we wish to see our economy and to develop or indeed the views of our elected representatives in Dail Eireann. At times we could be forgiven for thinking that our politicians have managed to transfer responsibility for the regulation for important sectors of our economy from themselves to unelected, unaccountable commissions or regulatory bodies. The Commission on Regulation sought in this resolution would bring a cohesion to the implementation of regulatory policy and would introduce greater democratic accountability and control so we urge you to support the resolution. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Billy. Before I take a vote can the movers of 26, 27 and 28 please move down to the hall because we be taking those in common debate. Can I put motion 31 to the Conference, those in favour please, show those against, abstentions, passed unanimously.

Moving to motion 26 Decentralisation in the name of PSEU.

Tom Geraghty, PSEU

Tom Geraghty, PSEU proposing motion no. 26. The first thing I want to say is that I just want to make it clear that my union has no difficulty whatsoever with the concept of decentralisation. Indeed the Irish Civil Service is already decentralised to a very significant degree. If you go into any significant town anywhere around the republic you will find offices of the Revenue Commissioners, Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social & Family Affairs and the Courts Service all of which are staffed by civil servants and in addition to that there has been a fairly considerable degree of decentralisation already in the last twenty years. Major departments have shifted large numbers of staff around the country and we have always adopted the approach that we will engage with the employer in relation to the issues that arise from the decentralisation programme, we will try and resolve the problems and we will try and protect the interests of those people who wish to remain within Dublin. In fact when Charlie McCreevey, some five years ago announced his intention to decentralise 10,000 jobs around the country we didn't oppose that position we said that while we thought that 10,000 was perhaps somewhat ambitious the employer should survey the staff in the civil service because obviously we are well aware that there are large numbers of people who wish to live and work somewhere other than Dublin and ascertain where they want to go and how many of them want to go and we would cooperate with that process but the Government refused. Now we are not so naïve as to suggest that we don't know why, I think we all know that there are other considerations on the part of Government apart from the interest of their staff but the purpose of this motion is to make the point that the staff are in fact stakeholders in this particular process and we will not apologise for the fact that we will defend their interest and while we're prepared to engage in a constructive fashion we will not be slow to defend their interests and I feel the need to make that point because the constant debate about decentralisation centres on whether it is 'a good or a bad thing'. We are not particularly interested in entering in on that debate, what we are interested in doing is ensuring that a process of decentralisation takes some account of the people who are affected most directly by that process. I'd ask you to adopt the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Seconders, seconders. Are you seconding?

Blair Horan, CPSU

Blair Horan, General Secretary, CPSU seconding the motion. We support this motion but in doing so I want to make it clear that CPSU as a union has

supported the decentralisation programme from the beginning, for the pure and simple reason that we made the judgement that we had members waiting for lengthy periods on transfer lists who would be interested in moving onto the decentralisation programme and that has certainly turned outchange tape

.....professional and technical staff in the civil service is not realistic. The very fact of the matter is if you're a clerical officer in the civil service you can work in any location around the country so the chances of actually getting the location of your choice, your home location is obviously very, very high. We have made significant progress in our discussions with the Department of Finance and while the Department of Finance have not said it up front effectively they have agreed that where there are shortfalls in posts they will fill them on promotion and I believe, certainly for our grades, that all of the posts on promotion will be filled. There are still some difficulties in relation to staff in Dublin. We made it clear from the start that we will not accept the decentralisation being at the expense of promotional prospects for members in Dublin. Support the motion

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any more speakers to motion 26. Speaking to motion 26 Michael?

Michael Sharp, Amicus

Michael Sharp, Amicus, speaking to motion 16. In the nature of biennial delegate Conferences this is the first opportunity we've had to discuss decentralisation and it's important we get the issue right. I've welcomed the statement by the seconder of the motion about professional and technical staff. Amicus represents many professional technical staff in the state agencies that are on the decentralisation list. Those staff have expressed bewilderment and astonishment at the proposals that they should be moved. With no difficulty with decentralisation per se, we have many regional offices around the country but to move highly qualified, skilled, professional staff is impossible to move the agency without them is impossible, to move them to another agency that requires totally different skills and experience is impossible. So government ministers may fudge that issue when asked the question. The trade union movement unfortunately cannot and if we're going to represent all our members in the context of motion 26 then representing their needs essentially means saying to Government 'what part of no do you not understand.

Brendan Hayes, SIPTU

Brendan Hayes, SIPTU supporting resolution 26. The reality is that the proposition to transfer the non-commercial semi-state companies around the

country is daft. It is not even driven by an ideological objective it's driven by pure political opportunism. The bulk of the staff in those organisations are not capable of transferring into the civil service because of the arrangements that are in place. The proposal that they will be dealt with on a voluntary basis is incapable of implementation and the reality is that most of them, the Government will act in breach of the law if the attempts to move the organisations in a manner in which they propose to do. It is important that this matter is dealt with intelligently and that the Government step back from the proposition to transfer non-commercial semi-states in the manner in which they propose to do. I ask you to support this resolution. Thank you.

Peter Nolan, IMPACT

Peter Nolan, IMPACT supporting motions 26, 27 and 28. As has been previously stated the position in relation to the movement of staff with professional and technical qualifications will result of much of the programme of decentralisation being redundant. One of the biggest policy initiatives in terms of modernisation of the public service in terms of decentralisation is going to be jeopardised by the failure of the Government to consult meaningfully with the stakeholders involved. Two practical examples and specific examples, there's a requirement for 80 probation officers to move to Navan not one have volunteered and not one will go. We are aware that there is another government office which wishes to move to that location and it's an area where there is over subscription and we're being told that this cannot happen because the Government have made a decision and they are not turning back on it. That sort of intransigence does nothing to develop credibility in proposals in relation to decentralisation. Decentralisation is necessary, it suits many of the staff that are involved but in that context it must be done in consultation with the staff involved. The second element of this proposal involves any of us who are involved in trying to extract additional expenditure whether it's €100 or less from the Department tells us there needs to be a business case presented and I don't like that language, I do understand that you need to substantiate your arguments. Not one costing has been done on this proposal and I predict that in ten years time that there will be tribunals to be established as to why taxpayers money has been sucked out of the system by a proposal that has not been planned. I urge your support for the motions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Motion 27 in the name of TSSA

Maureen Sneyd, TSSA

Mr. President, Conference Maureen Sneyd from TSSA speaking on motion 27.

TSSA has a singular interest in this matter as we represent all the salary staff involved from the head office from Bus Eireann. The proposal to relocate or decentralise Head Office is flawed on a number of counts. Bus Eireann is the commercial semi-state company and its employees are not civil servants. The inclusion of Bus Eireann head quarters was to show a transfer of jobs to Mitchelstown following the closure of the Dairygold processing plant. It was also to Fianna Fail TD Ned O'Keeffe. The proposal had 200 jobs to move, there's only 90 jobs in Bus Eireann head quarters, Charlie McCreevey got his sums wrong. We in TSSA believe it was an act of vengeance also mooted by Seamus Brennan when the trade unions prevented him from privatising 25% of Bus Eireann and Bus Atha Cliath. Finally the proposal was not based on sound financial or business reasons. TSSA oppose decentralisation, my colleagues in Broadstone oppose decentralisation and relocation, we also will resist it. I would ask for your support. I move.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague. Have you seconder?

Sean O'Riordan, AHCPs

Sean O'Riordan, Association of Higher Civil Servants. We've two concerns, one is with the human resources and staffing issues articulated by Tom Geraghty and the other is with business issues, quality of services. I think it's reasonable when one talks about decentralisation to remember that we are talking about people and their families and while everybody would wish to see a staff accommodated who would wish to go down the country, we don't to see people who have spent their lives in the service of this state be left in the situation where they have no jobs in Dublin or where they have no careers. Overall the Government want to transfer ten and a half thousand public servants, in Dublin over five thousand, five and a half thousand don't wish to move and that's a reality that has to be taken on board. In terms of the business case behind this, and it's quite correct to refer to the business case, just remember that while the Government lectures us on the need to do reasonable presentations, cost benefit analysis, risk analysis and all of that, this did not happen in the context of the decision on decentralisation. The expectation of reasonable people is that decentralisation would have been chosen on a basis that was rational, that a survey would have been carried out, that there would have been advance consultation, that functions would have moved that were appropriate to move. The idea of taking your central government policy making function and transferring it to fifty-three locations in twenty six counties makes absolutely no sense. If we had people coming in from Eastern Europe who wanted to know

how to coordinate the functions of government and we told them what they should do is to transfer to fifty three locations we'd all be in difficulty. Delegates there are aspects of this that do just not make sense, we' like to see the thing go ahead in a reasonable way, it's time to slow it down. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Mover of motion 28 in the name of FUGE.

Michael Coffey, FUGE

Delegate, President, Michael Coffey speaking on behalf of the FUGE. The FUGE have a slightly different view than some of our colleagues on decentralisation and view the proposed figure of ten thousand civil servants being decentralised out of Dublin is far too ambitious and impractical. The decision by Government to cause widespread disillusionment among my members and will cause serious disruption to them and their families, many of whom rely on rostered overtime and allowances in order to supplement low basic pay. No protection or consideration has been guaranteed for the losses that will occur when the Department decentralises out of Dublin. This is further compounded by the fact that there are limited promotional opportunities for the grade we represent which is a major concern to the union at present. The age group of many of the people affected are 45 years and upwards who have long service in their Department with families settled in their communities and in most cases surviving on one income. When members are recruited for particular areas of Government departments and spend most of their working life in those areas and as a result of this become deeply rooted in their grades. The central application facility otherwise known as the "The CAF" resulted in no more than ten expressions of interest throughout the whole union. As a result of this there will be up to three hundred staff remaining in Dublin without jobs. The FUGE are not against all forms of decentralisation and indeed has supported and participated in the past, what we are opposed to is entire government departments being moved out of the capital. Despite statements that decentralisation will be on a voluntary basis it is now taking on an involuntary nature. On the question of voluntary none of my members will be volunteering for a reduction in wages which will be the case if they are forced to dispersed to other areas of government departments. My union demands, number one an absolute guarantee that there will be no loss of earning or entitlements for FUGE grades remaining in Dublin, number two that there will be full civil service employment in all decentralised areas without any threat to privatise, the dreaded word again, and that Government have filled their obligation to the communities that they promised. And I believe that any organisation or government policy that is flawed that government should be big enough to adjust the policy to suit the people they represent. Thank you, I move the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any more speakers to the motions? Can I move to motion 26 put to Conference those in favour please show, against, abstentions, that's passed. Motion 27 those in favour please show, against, abstentions, that's passed. Motion 28 please show those in favour, those against. Motion 28 can we get someone to formally second? Motion 28 those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, they're all passed.

Moving onto motion 29 Double Taxation Fermanagh Trades Council. The Executive are looking for remission on this motion if remission is not acceptable it will be opposed.

Paul Dale, Fermanagh Trades Council

I'm surprised President but I look forward to the argument. President, comrades, Paul Dale, Fermanagh Trades Council to move motion 29. Like many towns in Northern Ireland, a Saturday in Enniskillen will see some traditional musicians, some born again preachers and anti-water charge campaigners campaigners up in the main square, the Diamond. We get visitors from all over Northern Ireland and indeed Ireland but the northern ones will say 'I'll sign up no problem I've signed in my own town and what the hell I'll sign it here too', it's a stall and a petition that regularly sees people queue up to sign. The consciousness and knowledge on the issue is tremendous. They're worried of their redundancies, they're worried of the public health repercussions but they're enraged in particular that this is a double tax. The public know they pay already in the rates, a lot still remember the water Commissioners office in Belfast where payments used to be made. They're now subsumed into the Rates Bill and as we heard yesterday it's figured 38% of our rates goes towards the water provision. It's a double tax that has convinced people they're being treated unfairly, that has pensioners phoning radio stations just last week saying 'I can't pay, I wont pay and I'll go to jail if needs be'. Our communities, Conference, know when they're being ripped off. Likewise I attended anti-paying tax protest in Finglas, protests that had three or four feet of marchers building up to 200 to 300 in a rally in a local area. It was tremendous to see because most people hadn't been on a march before and they were marching with their neighbours in their own areas. Again they were acutely aware of being ripped off of having to pay twice for an essential service that if not carried out would lead to breakdown public health, pest control problems etc. yet the local authorities were happy to gamble that people would pay twice for that. This motion is quite straight forward, we support all those who say we can't pay and we wont pay double taxes. We want campaigns uniting those who work in the industries taking action to defend the jobs and their services with the community who use them and in the water rates that is up and running and we want it progressed. We believe the introduction of

any form of separate charges for amenities is preparing the way for double taxes even for example the water charge if the rates were to come down by the same amount we should oppose a separate charge because that's going to be the vehicle that this service will be privatised. Why else would they set up a separate billing system with all the extra costs involved? Congress we shouldn't prevaricate any decision other than full support for this motion will signal doubts on our behalf. Two issues here only examples this covers all amenities that could be privatised and Congress send a clear message to privateers and the likes of Peter Hain. Please support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Have your got a seconder? Formally. Any other speakers? Okay.

David Begg General Secretary, Congress

Well the reason we're asking for the remit is the difficulty of handling this motion in terms of it attempting to cover two jurisdictions. I think paragraph 5 of Standing Orders Report no. 1 avers to that difficulty but has allowed a number of motions on the agenda notwithstanding its reservations about that. I mean it's clear that the Conference has already supported policy in relation to water rates and that's not an issue but what is an issue is the whole of point of fiscal policy in the Republic of Ireland, now you might notice from the annual report on pages 53 to 55 there's an extensive report there about the full gamut of tax policy and you will see in the documents, the briefing papers which were circulated to you today there is a paper dealing with again tax policy in the Republic and the fact is colleagues that the outgoing Executive Council had numerous meeting about this question and in addition to the papers and the report that you have seen individual members of the Executive Council have submitted extensive papers on what they see the future direction of tax policy should be. And the problem relates to the fact that public spending is a direct function of tax-raising as you know. In the two separate jurisdictions there are completely different regimes of public spending, the UK regime is heading for a level of 45% in 2006, the republic is at a level of around 33% of GDP and as a result there's a huge deficit in public service provision. If you take some of the areas which delegates mentioned in the course of their remarks over the last couple of days, first of all if you take health there's a 3,000 bed deficit in the health service in the republic, that's pretty much an accepted fact, part of government policy to acknowledge that even. In the area of caring the document that Paula Carey presented earlier today, if you do the costs of putting together an infrastructure of caring covering older people, people with disabilities and children, the total cost of that in the period of the 2011 is 3.4 billion euros and if you take the question of ageing and the cost that that will impose on the economy in the next 20 years or so it will increase public spending by 5.5%. Now it is true and delegates would no doubt

point out that we have a very unfair taxation system. We have enormous facility for tax avoidance if not tax evasion and Congress, in its policy papers, has been very actively campaigning against all of that but if you would allow a situation where say we managed to correct that it may very well be that providing the level of public services we need is going to require a widening of the tax base. It is going to require generating revenue which can fund up to I would have thought in excess of 40% at least of GDP in terms of public spending. Now that cannot be done easily and it is necessary for us when we go into confront government to be able to put something in front of them and say that's our formula for doing it, that's our approach to do it and we would respectfully suggest to the movers of the motion that we cannot manage to do that on the basis of taking one element of tax policy in isolation, we have to try to approach it on a comprehensive basis if we are to have a credible position. It's probably one of the biggest single issues that is going to face us at Congress over the coming years because the fact of the matter is that everybody wants better public services but nobody wants to face up to how they are going to be paid for and we will always give out about the shortcomings in the tax system and they are certainly there without a shadow of a doubt but we realistically, we have to wake up to the fact that as a society we have to have the right amount to pay for them.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

The General Secretary in a right to reply hasmoving the report on it. You've a right to reply.

David Begg General Secretary, Congress

Thanks President. I was wondering about the red light too but these things happen. Listen to that argument of increase services of having a look at the whole taxation policy to be honest I'm convinced does not cut across our motion. Our motion is about double taxes and double taxation that means if our members are paying for a service in one tax and already doing it is not correct and right that we should be charged a second tax for it. If it's a completely new tax system then that's a different issue, we can look that, this is dealing with double taxes. Personally I believe that if more money does need to be reused on the services it shouldn't be our members paying anymore money, our members pay enough as it is, it should be the large corporations and the big businesses. This motion does not cut across the argument just given. Please support the motion but don't accept remission.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers? Those in support of motion 30 please show, sorry motion 29 please show, those against, motion 29 is passed. Okay.

I move to motion 30. Can I also inform Conference that after motion 30 we'll be moving back to the business that we didn't conclude this morning starting with motion 40 on childcare and we'll be working back through the natural order of business then. Okay John,

John Douglas, Mandate

President, fellow delegates John Douglas, Mandate Trade Union proposing motion 30. Delegates the Irish economy is the fastest growing economy in the European Union we are now the second richest country only next to Luxembourg. But what sort of a society have we created, there are worrying signs that we are slowly creeping towards the US model where the income gap between rich and poor is ever increasing for example the highest level of poverty rates with 50% of our citizens living in poverty but over 200,000 persons in the Republic of Ireland are awaiting social housing. We have a health system and education system which is underfunded and access to services based on your ability to pay. We have tax exemption system which fuels private housing of apartments and huge rent roads for private landlords. We have thousands of immigrants being exploited, we have stealth taxes in the form of refuse charges and water charges, I could go on and go on. Frankly the Irish economy is based on inequality, not only in a quality of income but also in a quality of opportunity. Social solidarity is breaking down. Yet the situation would no doubt have been worse were it not for the actions of the trade union movement and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and yes we have achieved much in relation to the social agenda and jobs under various national programmes but frankly not enough. Lower paid workers particularly in the private sector are falling further and further behind and are struggling to survive. It's therefore no surprise that Mandate members voted 12 to one to reject the terms of the last national programme and they also voted by a similar margin to reject the previous two. This is a huge disconnection of our members, could you blame them, it's difficult to expect lower paid workers working for huge profit retailers to feel socially included when they have been struggling on rates of pay slightly above the national minimum wage. I would like to congratulate the CPSU and FUGE who have achieved much for their lower paid members through public sector benchmarking and regarding, a job well done. Unfortunately lower paid private sector workers don't have an opportunity of benchmarking. A recent study commissioned by Mandate trade union has shown that lower paid retail workers are falling steadily behind the wages of public sector lower paid workers by as much as 10 to 20 percent in the last five years. It is now time to speak up for those on lower incomes, the rising tide must lift all shifts. We in Mandate are asking that Congress develops a strategy which will deliver for lower paid

workers. We've had enough of the pious motions here every two years, we are asking that if central wage negotiations can't deliver well then let Mandate deliver for its own members. The strong must protect the weak in a unity and if the strong are unable or unwilling to fight for those most vulnerable and for the redistribution of wealth then Mandate will not participate in any future process which fails to deliver for our members. Mandate members are not willing slaves. I move the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. You seconding Larry?

Larry Broderick, IBOA

Larry Broderick, IBOA the Finance Union in one minute seconding the motion. Colleagues we are at a crisis unless the trade union movement addresses the issue of private sector workers for the future in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland we too will have a unionised environment in ten years time with only 5% recognition. The reality of national wage agreements has been a focus on public sector issues and public sector employees and the private sector have supported that. But in the context of a new national wage agreement there needs to be strategic approach that addresses the issue in the private sector. We in the banking industry have seen acceptance by our management of national wage agreements 30% increases for executives, compulsory redundancies attempted in our organisations and our members too have fallen behind by 10 and 15 percent in terms of people in the public sector. The reality now is we do not want another national wage agreement where this movement tries to out vote public sector unions and private sector unions in the context of that approach, we need a new strategic approach colleagues that is inclusive involving all. Let's address private sector workers now. Two resolutions out of eighty is not good enough. Support the motion colleagues.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

No speakers on motion 30, can I put motion 30 to the floor. Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions. Passed unanimous.

Can I move now to motion 40 in the name of the Guinness Staff Union. This motion has an amendment to it. Are you accepting the amendment?

We are accepting the amendment.

Okay, thank you.

I'm glad childcare didn't fall quite to the bottom of the heap, it's still important.

Ann Lannon, GSU

Colleagues, Ann Lannon moving the motion 40 on behalf of the Guinness Union. Before every ICTU Conference we write out to our union members to give them a chance to suggest motions for consideration. The issue of childcare for working parents topped the response of our members this year. They had a number of concerns. This is not a women's issue this is a family issue. They were concerned about a report on the workplace of the future which stated that childcare costs in Ireland are the highest in Europe. The report found that Irish Parents paid on average 20% of their annual income towards childcare which is almost twice the EU average of 12%. Ireland was ranked the worst of fifteen European countries. We and almost all working parents believe that childcare costs are prohibitive and can contribute significantly to keeping large numbers of women out of the workforce. One in three women feel that they have to downgrade their career ambitions as a result of having children. This was the findings of a recent survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development and to put it frankly to you it is a disgrace. We in the trade union movement have a proud history for standing up for the rights of the underdog and opposing discrimination. It is now time for us to take a stand for working parents. As a first step we want all of you here in Conference to instruct the Executive Council to influence a change in policy and practice for childcare in this country with both the Government and employers. Furthermore we want Conference to instruct the Executive Council to campaign for affordable childcare arrangements including appropriate taxation relief. Whether this takes the form of a tax credit per child or a direct credit on the amount of money paid out in childcare whether it's extended maternity leave allowances whatever it takes to make childcare work in this country, explore all the options. One worth considering would be the childcare voucher system currently operational in the UK which has tax and PRSI implications, it seems worth looking into. Employers also have an important role to play in getting the much talked about work life balance especially large organisations or just lip service to a worn out sound bite about the family friendly policies and work life balance. The benefits to employers would be that they do not loose valued personnel, there would be no wasted investment for training and experience and they would be more confident of getting their employees back to work in the event of them having children. Many working families are now finding themselves in a situation where they cannot afford to have children. Anyway I'll end on this one and I hope you don't mind me suggesting this but you have your work life, quality of work quality of life and I would like to add to that in the front quality childcare, quality work, quality life. Thank you for listening.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Can we have a seconder. Formally. Speaking to the motion.

Patricia Tobin, PSEU

Patricia Tobin, PSEU speaking in support of the motion. The availability of quality affordable childcare is a major concern to all parents and of particular concern to working parents who constantly require childcare. With the continuing rise in the number of women in the workforce currently 60% of all mothers with children in the 5-14 years age group are in paid employment the demand for childcare is also rising dramatically. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to the provision and funding of childcare. This motion calls on Congress to pursue the provision of affordable childcare arrangements including tax relief and childcare costs. Payment for childcare is a genuine expense associated with going out to work and should be treated as such for tax purposes. Tax relief would be welcomed by members of my union who are mainly middle management grades in civil and public service. Although they could be regarded as middle income workers they are finding that funding childcare for their family is a crippling burden when added to the exorbitant costs of housing. So I'd ask you please to support the motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President.

Thank you. Any other speakers to the motion? Can we put motion 40 as amended to the floor please, those in favour, those against, abstentions. It's passed unanimous. Can I move now to motion 41 and the INTO.

Catherine Byrne, INTO

Thank you President. Colleagues on behalf of the INTO I move motion 41 and this motion I suppose is based on a premise that every child deserves to get the best possible start in life and that decisions about childcare should be at the heart or the need of the child should be at the heart of decisions about childcare. Secondly, that parents should have real choices in relation to balancing work and family life through a range of affordable, high quality integrated services and finally that a carer and education and childcare strategy with targets and budgets is long overdue. Now the unprecedented surge of policy documents and public debate I think provides this movement with a golden opportunity to move our agenda forward. We've had a decade of growth of women in the labour market, we've had a changed emphasis in our society on children, we have I think a real debate going on about work life balance and quality childcare provision are high priorities for families and this was witnessed I think in recent bi-elections. So

those kind of landmarks I think give us the opportunity to try and move forward, objectives and goals of this organisation that have been around for a very long time. If it weren't for the sterling work that has been done by our representatives for example on the national childcare strategy and the courage I think of some civil servants in trying to move forward, equal opportunities to the development of the OECP I think we'd even be much further behind than we are at the moment. So I suppose what I want to really say, I mean I can't address all of the issues, but it's as simple as this, we have a great catalyst at the moment for change and for the delivery of our objectives and that catalyst comes about because of a number of factors, those that I just outlined where there's a public debate, a change in attitude to children. We have an election on the horizon and we have negotiations ahead of us so social advance as we heard this morning is only is only made determined people. We need to unite with all the voices that are speaking out about childcare at the moment with the voluntary the public and the private sector, with politicians. Failure to take action at this time by government will be judged very unfavourably by future generations. In terms of human sustainability that we heard about an hour ago and social cohesiveness I urge you colleagues to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconded.

Declan Kelleher, INTO

Declan Kelleher, INTO. In seconding the motion I wish to deal specifically with the section on class size in the infant section of our primary schools. The Government in the Republic made a clear commitment in their Programme for Government three years ago to reduce class size for all children under nine years of age to the class size of 20 to 1 in line with best European practice. Unfortunately, since then the Government has turned its back on this commitment and has allowed our young 4 to 6 year olds to continue in classes of 25, 30 and in many cases 35. This is totally unacceptable. How can you have legislation in the private sector which enforces a ratio of one adult to every eight 3 to 4 year old children and yet tolerate a ratio of one teacher to every 30, 4 to 6 year old children. This is absolute hypocrisy and we must expose it and the ballot box in the next General Election if this Government fails to deliver to our young and vulnerable children. Colleagues every child is entitled to a quality, properly staffed and funded education service and this must be a very basic social objective for each and every one of us. Go raibh maith agat.

Annette Dolan, TUI

Annette Dolan, Teachers' Union of Ireland. Colleagues currently 10% of Irish citizens are children under the age of six, you'd hardly believe it because according to the OECD Irish investment in childcare is extremely low at .2% of GDP as opposed to a 10% higher level of investment in Sweden of 2% of GDP. Additional investment, substantial investment is required to bring us in line with our more progressive EU partners. For instance in German three years parental leave is offered with an allowance of up to €300 a month, it is also possible to work part-time without losing the allowance. The unavailability of professional childcare facilities and even when they are available the prohibitive cost of same is forcing women to leave the workforce when they have children. Colleagues, I urge you to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers to motion 41?

Ann Martin, INO

Ann Martin, Irish Nurses' Organisation supporting the motion. In implementing the concepts contained within the INTO motion, this would bring us in line with care and education systems available of Europe wide. Parents in Italy for example can enrol their 3 year old child in a state funded system which is staffed with trained pre-school teachers and support staff. Their system recognises the needs of small children, they start at 8.30 in the morning and conclude in the afternoon between 16.30 and 1500 hours. But if they do provide for the needs of children lunches, naps all the needs of a small child play etc. At the age of six these children then enter primary school. But one question remains in my head however in relation to the Irish system if the school commencement age in Ireland is 4 years are we expecting too much education at the age of 4 or 5 years particularly when no universal pre-school preparation system exists in this country. I ask you to support this motion please.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any other speakers to 41?

Tonia Kellen, NIPSA

President, Brothers and Sisters, Tonia Kellen speaking on behalf of NIPSA supporting motion 41. The debate this morning on the equality section of the Annual Report show the importance that Congress is rightly placing on removing barriers to participate in family life. It's without doubt that the current childcare situation in Northern Ireland is unquestionably scandalous. However motion 41 calls on Government to introduce the eight initiatives mentioned. As we are all aware sadly that most calls on Government falls on deaf ears. This morning the Chair of the Women's Committee emphasised the importance of walking the walk and talking the talk. In this context I would draw Congress' attention to the current struggles in Northern Ireland to defend and support better recognition for classroom assistants against Government cutbacks and vicious attacks. If the fine words of this motion are to be seen or not to be seen as empty posturing by the thousands of our members fighting presently for their jobs it is essential that those sponsoring motions must take concrete steps, yes walk the walk show support to our brothers and sisters but do it in practical ways such as supporting members not to cross picket lines. To really support this resolution, I'm just finishing this point, I would call on Congress to stop hiding and call on our unions to gather behind a robust and serious campaign to achieve these aims. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers to 41, motion 41? Can I put motion 41 to the floor? Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions. Passed unanimously. Can I move now to motion 42 is Childcare in the name of the INO.

Madeline Spiers, INO

Madeline Spiers, INO. President and delegates, this is a core issue that has to be addressed. I was delighted to listen to Seamus Dooley yesterday when said 'we've had a feminisation of our Executive on ICTU' and it's not before time. What we need is the ICTU Executive to recognise that if they want a vibrant union tradition to be continued in Ireland they have to meet the needs of the people that form those unions or could form those unions. Women are driving this economy, they have been behind this vibrant economy and if you don't answer the needs of women and working parents you're a non-entity, you're too traditional and you have to move away from the hard core issues of transport, housing, they're important but as Madeline Bunting said very clearly today the issues we have to address is social solidarity, the issues we have to address is who's going to care for our children, our environment, our education and our health. There are scandals in health and industry here that were they in Sweden or any of the Nordic countries which we look to for leadership for the type of society that we want they would be closed down. There is too much toleration to

the partnership programme that we have been suckered into and its time that we stepped back and realised that *Sustaining Progress* has possibilities but it also carries within it like a Trojan horse huge oppressions and we must stand up now as citizens and fight for our rights. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder.

Kay Garvey, INO

Kay Garvey, INO. I'm coming to these Conferences long enough, we've had women taken as tokenism between the Women's Conference the different things that have gone on here on Women's issues. We are now on childcare, we're getting about ten minutes of four days of a Conference. Childcare is men's work as well as well as women's work and if it was important, If men were breastfeeding and had nipples we'd hear more than this. We need more time than this. Childcare is the future of this country not just of our work but the country and hopefully Bertie Ahern will do something more than just lip token, tokenism for the childcare and I have to congratulate Paula Carey on her report this morning, it is coming out of ICTU so someone is doing something about childcare but we need to do a bit more than this and on the list of the service dividends from NESC education, childcare and healthcare came top of the three not ant the bottom where we seem to be suckered to this and I wish ICTU and SIPTU and all the other unions would wake up that women are a powerful lot in a lot of different unions and we need a bit more support. Maybe if we put nipples on men things will change.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Sorry delegate, Ann, Ann moving 43 they can speak to both motions. Taking 42 and 43 in the order of business and then you can speak in common debate.

Brendan Hayes, SIPTU

Chairman, Delegates, Brendan Hayes, SIPTU moving resolution 43. I want to say the issue that arises here is not only women's issue it's a parents issue and it's important that we bear in mind that when we come to define childcare we don't get suckered into an IBEC agenda of simply talking about places where we can deposit children while we go off and do our work and work every hour that

God sends us. That's why this resolution is looking for an awful lot more than simple childcare places. Childcare is about working hours, childcare is about parental leave, childcare is about maternity leave, childcare is about the capacity to parent children and childcare is about children's rights. The fundamental point that we want to make in this resolution is this that if we're going to be serious about this issue we're going to have to move this agenda in those for a that we have power and influence. The General Secretary has said that national agreements in the past have dealt with pay and have dealt with a broad range of issues and maybe we should focus. While SIPTU is saying childcare is one of the issues we should focus on and we should focus on it intensely in the next agreement. We're also saying that in doing that we should confine ourselves to the IBEC agenda we should push the issue of a proper, structured parental leave, we should the issue of proper structured maternity leave and we should push the issue that children's rights will be defended in an economy where both men and women are working. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder? Are you seconder? 43 formally, speaking to

Renee Prendergast, AUT

Renee Prendergast, AUT Association of University Teachers speaking on motions 42 and 43 but also making a point relevant to the other childcare motions. The point that I want to refer to is that relating to tax relief and I just had a very solitary lesson about tax relief. I work for a fairly progressive employer in this city who provides childcare. They're allowed to use something called a salary sacrifice scheme which they have recently agreed to introduce, they're pocketing some money unaccounted because they don't have to pay the employers contribution for national insurance on the relevant amount. They're charging the staff an administration charge to implement the scheme and they are taking the opportunity to put up fees by 20%. I and others have tried to resist this but the answer is 'oh when we take the tax relief into account it's a very reasonable amount' and I'm just saying tax relief is not a penalty, you need to try and make sure that that actually gets delivered to you in the form of a reduction in childcare costs, it will not necessarily do so.

Ann Martin, INO

Ann Martin, Irish Nurses' Organisation. I'm speaking to motion 42 and I'm in sympathy with 41, 42 and 43 because they do all dovetail in together. In Ireland we have benefited substantially from our EU membership both economically and

socially. In the context of childcare however, we have not benefited to the extent that our European colleagues benefited. Childcare really begins before the child is born. I'll give delegates an example how the Italian Government provides for childcare (*tape change*) ...who is going on maternity leave so there is no additional cost to employment so maybe IBEC should take note. The five months leave have divided into one or two months pre-birth. This is dependent on the type of work undertaken by the mother to be, that's either light duties or heavy duties and the obligation is on the women undertaking heavy duties such as clinical nursing would be classified, to go on leave the two months before leave. That allows for three to four months after the birth that kind of flexibility. In Ireland, the Irish Government have permitted women to work up to two weeks before birth with the consequences for that. Now if a woman becomes ill during pregnancy with a pregnancy related illness she'll be entitled to 80% of her salary, that's contract dependent until her leave commences and after that, I'll just finish the point in relation to lactation, she has an option of taking six months leave at 30% of her salary. I could go on and on about the disparities that exist between what is meant to be European regulations and how our Irish Government have actually implemented it. For all the work we have done through ICTU and some of it's beneficial we actually need to do a lot more.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Speaking to the motion.

Thank you President. President, Conference I have a great sense of déjà vu, it's about thirty years since I was last at an ICTU Conference but then very much childcare was on the agenda then, Oh how time moves when nothings happening. The point is actually we said it thirty years ago and we say it today, you cannot talk about equality of opportunity, you cannot talk about gender equality, you cannot talk work life balance, family friendly policies etc. and getting people into the workforce particularly women if you do nothing about childcare, it is impossible to have equality. I share the sentiments actually of our colleagues from Guinness and the INO when they were saying women make up a large proportion of the trade union movement and we have got about ten minutes of this Conference. Conference it is a disgrace on us, I support all three motions but hopefully we will not be back at the next Conference with the same motions on the agenda with the same lack of failure. Thank you Conference.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any more speakers to motion 42 and 43? Can I put motion 42 to the floor, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, passed

unanimous. Can I put motion 43 to the floor, those for, those against, abstentions, unanimous. Both motion 42 and 43 passed.

Can I move now to motion 44, Free Education, in the name of TUI

Declan Glynn, TUI

Thank you President. Good afternoon President, Executive members and Congress my name is Declan Glynn from the Teachers' Union of Ireland now unfortunately time constraints and the longevity of others on the podium has forced me to edit out all of the witticisms and jokes I had for you so I'll give you the Australian version if you don't mind. The motion is rather curiously titled free education I but believe that that might be something of an inadvertent misnomer because our concern is not so much a matter of free education as a matter of education free of disruption and matter of pupil appropriate provision. The focus of the motion distils towards the end of the piece of the motion itself in a call for effective strategies and interventions to meet the education needs of the willing learner, the amenable pupil on the one hand and on the other hand all also to meet the needs of her antithesis the continual disrupter. Because pupil disruption for our members in Ireland is foremost amongst our concerns, to borrow from Mark Twain, it is no small matter. The trouble though is that our employer in the state has done little if anything to help us address the near insuperable problem of pupil disruption continual, unabated, besetting, damaging pupil disruption in our schools. We are operating still under 1991 circular letter and we look with some envy, recognising that it's not a panacea but we look at it with a strategy and interventions that have been offered here in Northern Ireland for instance in the 1998 strategy promoting and sustaining good behaviour. In Scotland more recently in better behaviour and better learning which is now in phase two and had been recognised by the Scottish Executive Chief Inspector Graham Donaldson as a signal success and in England last May to the establishment of the new leadership group on behaviour and discipline chaired by Sir Alan Steer. Now we adopted a, we wrote a draft policy last April, we held a special Conference in December the 4th of December and we called for the establishment of a Commission in Ireland on behaviour in post primary schools. For those of us concerned or otherwise we got our commission through announcement the following day the 5th of December and we have channelled our energies into telling this commission that it needs to be overtly reformist in its agenda and that laissez faire has characterised the State's approach to discipline in Ireland. We look for credible coherent strategies and an implementation plan on pupil behaviour and our earnest supplication, our earnest demand and our most adamant insistence is that this body will bring forward effective strategies for us in the very near future to borrow from a prayer and to close we wait in joyful anticipation for the coming of our saviour the report of the commission on discipline in post primary schools. Thank you Chair.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconding the motion.

Paddy Healy, TUI

Paddy Healy, TUI seconding the motion. There are discipline problems in better off areas, you've heard of the yob culture, binge drinking and so on but the problems faced by schools in disadvantaged areas arising for indiscipline are of a totally different order. Now the vast majority of people in disadvantaged areas support their school, keep children on at school until leaving cert at considerable sacrifice to themselves and the failure to solve the problem of indiscipline seriously further disadvantages the children of disadvantaged parents. It's a particular problem because our members have to grapple with the whole area of disadvantage combined with whole area of indiscipline, we have sought legal redress but we also real resources and the last items on this motion set that out very clearly. If a student isn't suitable to be in a classroom environment that student must get help as well and there has to be an intervention to help that student. If a student has to be excluded from the school there has to be an intervention to help that student. That's why we want, when the Minister gives her report in the next few days, we want not alone recommendations we want real resources to implement those resources. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers to motion 44? Can I put motion 44 to the floor please? Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, unanimous decision. Motion 44

Move on to motion 45 in the name of INTO

John Carr, INTO

A Chairde, John Carr INTO moving motion 45. Today one in six children in our society lives in poverty, in stark terms this means that thousands of our children don't enjoy the basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. It is a national scandal that schools in disadvantaged areas have to set up breakfast clubs in one of the richest countries in the world. But poverty is not inevitable, countries with lowest child poverty rates such as Norway and Sweden may allocate the highest proportion of their gross national product on social expenditure, we

allocate the lowest. Low taxation is attractive but it comes in a non-acceptable price to the poor and marginalised in our society. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen to the extent that according to the National Economic and Social Forum we have one of the most unequal disparities of income in Europe with massive cash inequalities and inequality in education participation. We are in effect creating an underclass in this society. But if education is still to greatly reduce if not break the vicious cycle of poverty that prevails society than governments and we much force governments to commit a far higher and fairer level of resourcing to our disadvantaged areas. Any individual pupil in a situation of deprivation or disadvantage should have an automatic entitlement to assistance from the state, and this can only be achieved through allocating a percentage of the education budget and we say 15% to the disadvantaged. If we take that as our basic premise then we can begin to look what might be done for children in severely disadvantaged areas. For the very young this will entail, as we had earlier on, the provision and childcare facilities followed by early childhood education opportunities. For those in primary classes it means a small classes. For the hundred who don't go on to post primary it means putting resources in for them and again it means access to third level. All of us here present value childhood as a special time in our lives, a child should be cherished, nourished, supported and protected. Regrettably that is not what childhood means to a significant number of our primary school going population today. For the children of the poor and the underprivileged it means having a one in three chance that school lives will follow a predictable path on underachievement and early dropout and that their future will be one of poverty, unemployment and seclusion. I said here six years ago and I repeat it today it is wrong that for some children school represents a continued experience of failure. It is wrong that children are leaving our education systems without the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. We are good at fighting for the rights of the unborn but dismal at caring for those born into a society particularly the underprivileged. Go raibh maith agat.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder.

Noreen Flynn

President and Delegates. The PPF and *Sustaining Progress* both contain the aspiration of an inclusive society yet despite our economic prosperity we have so far failed to provide the holistic support and services required to help our most disadvantaged rise out of the poverty trap. Earlier and primary education must take priority in terms of funding if the cycle of poverty and educational disadvantage is to be broken. While it is essential that third level access is made available to student from disadvantaged areas there is little point in offering this

access to a student who has not had the opportunity to acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy at primary level. We learned with dismay this week that over the past eight years the Department of Education and Science has returned a five hundred million underspend in its education budget to finance. We can only dream delegates of the impact this money would have made in tackling educational disadvantage. In the context of any future negotiation on a national agreement I therefore call on the Executive Council to continue to pursue equality of educational opportunity. I ask you to support the motion.

Michael Connor, Communications Workers' Union

Michael Connor, Communication Workers' Union. President, Conference speaking in favour of motion 45 and I especially agree with paragraph 3 of the motion which states that 'this Conference believes that the current programme to counter educational disadvantage is not sufficiently resourced or coordinated. Our slogan here this week is quality work, quality life, what is also required is quality education with equal access available to all. In a classroom it cannot be assumed that every child has the ability to see the blackboard, hear what the teacher is saying or can learn at the same pace as their fellow pupils. Those pupils who experience learning difficulties need and should have the right to resources in order to allow them to participate fully in society. Until recently the method for calculating what extra resources a school required for these pupils depended on the actual number of pupils in the school with learning difficulties. This is now changed whereby it is the total overall number of pupils attending a school that is used to determine what resources are allocated irrespective of the socio-economic situation that pertains in the area being serviced by that school. We live in an unequal society and therefore a simple accounting mechanism to determine what resources are required cannot be utilised. This simple accounting will result in already underfunded resources being allocated in an inefficient manner and will hurt and let down those who are most in need. For as long as we live in an unequal society the method for determining what resources are required by a school for special needs should be such as to reflect as accurately as possible the actual number of pupils who require this support. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker to the motion. Next speaker to motion 45.

Donal O'Donoghue, INTO

Donal O'Donoghue, INTO. Colleagues just a very brief word on part e of the motion. As workers we won't get a pay increase on the basis of a cost of living or a share national wealth claim. We have to make the demands on modernisation acceptance of change and to do so to a specific timetable. Performance verification groups are set up to monitor our level of compliance. On page five of the Executive Council report progress in relation to the provision of affordable housing is 'slow, painfully, wearily, exhaustingly slow'. If we the workers were accepting change at that rate we wouldn't get paid. Notwithstanding what we heard this morning I believe we must insist on the Government delivering on their commitments on quality of life issues such as housing and education, on time as we're expected to, if we are to continue to support the partnership process, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. Please support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker. Anyone else speaking to motion 45. Okay. Can I put motion 45 to the floor. Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions. Passed unanimously.

Move now to motion 46 Education Funding in the name of NASUWT.

Renee Prendergast, Association of University Teachers

Renee Prendergast, Association of University Teachers moving motion 47 on higher education funding. One of the most significant divides between the world's richest countries and the world's poorest countries is the amount of schooling that a child can expect to get. A big part of this difference depends

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Excuse me colleague are you motion 46? I asked for NASUWT on motion 46.

Lorraine Strong, NASUWT

Thanks Brendan. Congress there are many figures bandied about regarding the levels of funding and investment in education in Northern Ireland. It's true the Government is embarking on a major infrastructure programme of around about 2.5 billion pounds over the next 5 to 10 years but much of this involves the private sector. We do have major structural issues which need to be addressed, we do have a falling school roll but the simple fact of the matter is that they cannot be resolved in the short term. We cannot allow valuable services to be lost on the back of this argument. We know the problems we accept the need for

radical change but not at the expense of our children's education. At this time in this moment we need to address the immediate difficulties facing our educational system. We have had additional funding the Minister announced on Monday another 12.5 billion pounds to be given to us but is this money going to be enough. Is it going to be enough to save vital educational services. The parents and children that we serve as educators are demanding that something be done and be done now to address these issues. We know that our colleagues in other unions have been vigorously campaigning regarding the cuts with regard to classroom assistance and we wish to acknowledge our support for them. Classroom assistants have been absolutely a central role in supporting children with special educational needs and their role ensures that such children can be taught and supported in a mainstream school environment. This is what social inclusion is all about, it's essential that those pupils with special educational needs or those taught indeed outside of mainstream education are provided with their full entitlement. Cuts to the provision of English as an additional language is a serious problem that will effect many migrant workers in Northern Ireland. We've witnessed a major rise in the number of non-nationals coming to live and work in Ireland and we value the contribution they make to public services and we welcome the multi-cultural dimension they bring to our society. Yet if these cuts go forward both the parents and children from the range of different cultures will suffer and again this is not the way to promote social inclusion and is likely to effect some of the most socially disadvantaged in our society. On Tuesday morning Congress passed a series of motions to enhance the rights of migrant workers so I would urge you to support this motion again to enhance the rights of migrant workers. Playboard have recently announced the closure of 200 facilities for breakfast clubs and after school clubs. Congress this means a loss of 6,000 places and 600 jobs. Many parents will be forced to either give up their jobs or reduce their working hours yet the Government has just announced funding of 680 million for the provision of such a facility in England. Under the Barnett Formula there is money here, it's earmarked for childcare yet no Government department appears willing to bid for the money. Congress this is a disgrace. There is no childcare policy in the Northern Ireland Programme for Government yet it is a top priority in England and Wales and indeed yesterday the school age policy was launched in the south. In conclusion colleagues for our members there are real concerns, fears and indeed the realities of educational worker redundancies and schools closures. The bottom line is that jobs and children's education cannot be put in jeopardy because of financial shortcomings, education is not business it is a public service as such is should not be subject to business constraints. Thank you colleagues, I move the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconded. Seconded for motion 46. Formally seconded. Ok. Open for speakers.

Jack McGinley, SIPTU

Jack McGinley, President of SIPTU National Education Council. In supporting motion 46 I want to bring three points to the attention of Conference in relation to the stark underfunding of third level education in the Republic. There's a Government policy of having a knowledge based economy yet the funding of third level colleges at the moment is at its worst since the mid 1980s. One college UCC is approximately 50 million in deficit, Trinity College and UCD are severely underfunded. We've had a plethora of short term contracts, week to week contract and contracts not renewed. There have been no new blood appointments made and the pension schemes in a number of the colleges are coming under considerable difficulties. I would urge Congress, if there are talks in the autumn, to seek the proper rebalancing of funding in third level education so we can on with the job that we're supposed to do. Thank you colleagues.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Unidentified speaker

If I'm brusque it's because of the time constraint. I don't believe that we should see again a spectacle where UNISON, NIPSA and the T&G and representatives of the dinner ladies and the caretakers and the classroom assistants who are out on the picket lines while trade unionists are carrying on regardless. I believe that apart from losing public support I believe that if united vigour and determined action involving all the unions in our educational system. I believe that parents would support that given a clear and united lead from the unions and I say this to teachers, I'm not slagging off teachers unions or teachers in fact I know that I'm speaking for a lot of individuals rank and file teachers when I say this, that the teachers unions and their leaders should get it into their heads that if they come for the dinner ladies in the morning they'll be back for you in the afternoon. We either win this all together or wouldn't win it at all. What's happening is a full frontal assault on the value and aspirations underlying the 1948 Education Act. We need a response as vigorous as is the attack by New Labour. I hope that over the summer months preparing for the beginning new school year in September that there's talks at all levels between the teachers unions and the other unions in the education sector so that in September we can start to put manners on these New Labour ministers.

Padraig Mulhall, NIPSA

Comrades, Padraig Mulhall speaking on behalf of NIPSA to support the motion. In a minute it's very difficult to cover a twelve month old crisis in education and the next three years of crisis that we are facing into but I will make a few points on this issue. I think first of all we have to recognise that we now are in a situation where we have New Labour Government which is a government of economic war against the working class in this country and children. We have to recognise that they have to started this war and we should also recognise and congratulate the education unions UNISON, T&G, GMB and NIPSA for their response on May 13th for taking the battle back to the Government and sending a clear message that our education system is not for sale at any price. We will fight for the rights of education workers and we will fight for the rights of children. But I have to say this, we need the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to come behind that battle, the role of ICTU during that struggle was a shambles is the reality of the situation. ICTU could not convene a meeting of its own constituent parts to discuss the issues that need to be discussed and get them to turn up. They were supposed to launch a campaign, we are still waiting for the campaign to begin, that's a disgrace. While we're waiting hundreds of education workers are facing the dole, children are facing their education being ruined and ICTU has to answer for its failings the same as everybody else has to answer. In September we start the next round of this struggle that will mean protests, it will mean campaigns and it will mean strike action and we are asking ICTU to give us the lead in that fight. ICTU can't play and it should do. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Nuala Conlon, UNISON

President, Delegates, Nuala Conlon from UNISON. UNISON supports this motion particularly as it comes from the teaching union. These cuts are hitting our members hard, we've already spoke about school meals, cleaners, caretakers, classroom assistants, schools cross and patrols are getting their hours cut. Can I take this opportunity to congratulate UNISON, NIPSA and T&G who went out on Friday 13th May to show New Labour that we weren't taking these cuts. Can I also say that our members and NIPSA were prepared to do it again last Friday and can I also say that we will do it in September if necessary. But we support the motion but we want to call on all the education unions in the North to stand together and take action in September if necessary. I don't want to hear someone in a school talk about my members like they can afford to loose a day's pay or they all get low paid benefits. Our members cannot afford to do it but they're doing it for their children. We support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Next speaker.

Antoinette McMullen, NIPSA

Antoinette McMullen speaking for NIPSA. I think first of all we need to look and take a holistic approach to the whole cuts situation. The £12.5 million that Peter Hain spoke about is welcome but it is totally inadequate for the education service and don't be fooled by this money, this isn't new money this is coming out of other departments. This is Peter robbing to pay Paul or should I say Peter robbing to pay Angela, next year it will be Angela robbing somebody else to pay somebody else. This is not new money and it is not good enough. One of the areas and I'm talking about holistic approach that has been totally forgotten in this whole cuts issue has been the library service. Our libraries have been underfunded for years, not one single penny of this 12.5 million is going into that service and we want to thank those people who come around today to Belfast Central Library and supported our rally against library closures so we would ask that there's support from ICTU and other unions and that we fight harder in this campaign and that we also take this campaign to Decal because it is Decal who funds the library service. The only money that goes to the library service from the Education Department is for the schools library service and there's 2.5 million going into shared services. That money is not going in as extra money, that money is going in to create redundancies, that is why they are paying the money. They are creating redundancies to have fewer people doing more work and I say to the unions who weren't in our strike on the 13th, we hope that you come on board, we hope that you support us in September but if you don't our low paid workers they know the value of education, they know the value of that for their children and their grandchildren and we will go out and fight again if you will not. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker.

Dessie Donnelly, UNISON

President, Delegates, Dessie Donnelly on behalf of UNISON. I second the comments made by my previous colleagues as well and I also fully support this motion. I think as a movement we must be clear about the nature of our

education crisis that we are currently experiencing. Since the suspension of the assembly we've witnessed time after time direct row ministers clawing back hard won equality provisions that we won under section 75 of the Good Friday Agreement. These cuts to our education service will effect the most disadvantages within our communities yet were these cuts subjected in equality impact assessment, I don't think so. Why not? This was a clear example of the British Government not fulfilling its duties and obligations under the Good Friday Agreement. Direct row ministers have used the current political impasse and the democratic deficit this creates to implement a neo-liberal agenda of public service cutbacks and increase privatisation as can be witnessed by the proposal to privatise our school cleaning services. Delegates Congress needs to make clear to the British Government that the attacks mounted on our public services in general and our education services in particular, undermines the Good Friday Agreement, undermines the Peace Process, damages the next generation and looks like spite but we also importantly need to loose patience with politicians, politicians we recently elected here. The message is get your act together, stop making excuses for not doing business, together it may make you feel heroic and triumphalist but it is damaging our children and our future. I support

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Next speaker.

Paul Dale, Fermanagh Trades Council

Comrades, Paul Dale, Fermanagh Trades Council to support motion 46. A lot of points have been made I'm into my minute already, can I just say locally in Fermanagh when the strike was breaking we do have to commend the GMB members who came and stood on the picket line refused to cross the picket line because we're all aware they had certain difficulties that day. The position has been stated, the summer is going to cut across the campaign, we're convinced, I don't even have to say It's not just my own trades council I think I can speak for all trades council, we're absolutely convinced that this can go out to the community and can garner great, great support. What ICTU has to do today is go and discuss how on the 1st September we can get that campaign up and running again after naturally the summer break cut across it. I call now for a education wide march to be held in Belfast during September and ICTU are the people to organise it. Please support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any more speakers to motion 46. Can I put motion 46 to the floor. Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions. Unanimous decision. Thank you colleagues.

Moving again to motion 47 in the name of the AUT

Renee Prendergast, Association of University Teachers

President, Colleagues my apologies for getting ahead of myself I promise not to do it again. One of the biggest differences between rich countries and poor countries lies in the access of children to education at all levels but the big difference between rich countries and poor countries is that in rich countries children have reasonable prospect of access to a higher education where as in poor countries very few children by in large have. The contribution of the improvements in the quantity and quality of education in Ireland from the 1960s onwards is widely recognised as being a very important factor in the rapid growth in the economy in the 1990s. But it also acknowledged nowadays that the growth that was achieved currently sustained at the previous level and that in order to achieve much lower levels of growth, growth in line with other advanced countries we will have to invest an awful lot more in research and development and in skills training at all levels. To give some indication of the kind of magnitude we're talking about in 2002 to 2003 Sweden had 5.1 researchers for every 1,000 people, Finland had 1.4, Ireland had 2.4. In terms of proportion of GDP spend on R&D Sweden had 4.3%, Finland had 3.55, Ireland had 1.1%. The situation in Northern Ireland is probably even worse. An Taoiseach referred to the competition that we're already experiencing from emerging economies such India and China. If we are to build on what we have achieved to date, if we are to sustain progress in the future we need to substantially increase expenditure on education and on research and development in this country and I would argue that an important of this has to be done through public funding. Yesterday we had litany of industries in the service sector that are being put up for privatisation although there's no obvious efficiency gained from doing so, education is no exception. UNESCO says that expenditure worldwide on education is one thousand billion dollars naturally there are pressures to get into that industries. Already Northern Ireland students have to pay fees, already universities have to seek funding from industry for research and already we have increasing private property rights in knowledge which will hold back technological progress worldwide. I just pose these issues for consideration, I move that we take cognisance of the fact that we need substantial investment in the higher education and in research and the public sector has an important role to play in this. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Secunder. You seconding the motion?

Tom Dooley, Teachers' Union of Ireland

Tom Dooley, Teachers' Union of Ireland seconding the motion for the AUT. Just want to make a few points about the inadequacy of investment in education on both parts of this island. My union represents about 4,000 lecturers in the Institute of Technology sector in the south and just one instance of what this underfunding does, we have a whole range of part-time members who are covered by quite good legislation the unfortunate thing is that this good legislation is good on paper but the Department of Education in the south refuses to provide the money to fund the part-time legislation fixed term act and as a result our part-time members end up in a situation where, as my colleague spoke about, they can't get proper contracts, they're facing having their hours cut and so on and this is very similar to the situation on both parts of the island. Second thing is there's a large change coming about in the direction of the funding of third level education with a move towards a much more business model and I think it's incumbent on all of the teacher unions involved in representing workers in third level education and on the ICTU to ensure that there is representation from the working people of this island on all of those funding bodies that are funding third level education and representation from the workers in the sector as well and I would ask the ICTU to keep a close on that. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Tom. Speaking to motion 47

John Cudden, Communication Workers' Union

John Cudden from the Communication Workers' Union and the response to the support of 47. Can I ask the President here and the incoming members of the ICTU this year to look at ways that forward the education system for people with full-time working roles with regard to having part-time education of a third level nature delivered into structures which are closer to zoned areas for example I live in the western seaboard area of the country and generally I would have to travel to UCD, UCC or UCG in order to avail of these courses on a part-time nature and of necessitates me travelling over 270 miles. The Government has invested in the updating of the structures necessary to deliver these courses. Let's have the courses delivered at a more localised station. Thanks very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any more speakers on motion 47. Can I put motion 47 to the floor please so those in favour please show, against, abstentions and it's passed. Can I now move to motion 48 on Low Pay, CPSU.

Blair Horan, CPSU

President, Delegates, Blair Horan, CPSU. Delegates despite economic success in the Irish Republic in recent years significant inequalities persist in Irish society and while the decades long problems of chronic unemployment has largely been solved the recent CSO report show the proportion of people at risk of poverty in Ireland is one of the highest in EU15. So the rising tides are not lifting all boats and income inequalities in Ireland are still one of the highest in the EU15. It is proved very difficult to prioritise low pay in the social partnership negotiations in recent years due to IBEC's resistance but I do believe the additional half percent, modest though it was, in the last pay negotiations is an important breakthrough that we must build on. Delegates, tackling the gender pay gap is also a critical part of the process. The Lisbon Agenda commits to reducing the gender pay gap significantly by 2010. The civil service benchmarking awards showed very starkly that there are wide income differentials out there in the private sector. The plain fact of the matter is delegates, the more income differentials widen the more difficult it is to close the gender pay gap. We have challenged the benchmarking outcome under the equality legislation and we are awaiting the outcome of that. We recognise the good work ICTU has done on this issue but the current legislation may not be sufficient to solve the gender pay gap problem. We know the market left to its own devices will not produce fair outcomes, the key problem is the market undervalues traditional female occupations. France may currently be giving us a lead in this area. New legislation permits the social partners and requires sectoral agreements to work at eliminating the gender pay gap within five years. Delegates, we must move beyond studies and move to tackle the pay gap, we have a social partnership process that we rightly hold up as a model in EU terms, we must now use that process to finally tackle the gender pay gap because that more than anything else will tackle the problem of low pay. Thank you and support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder. Formally. Speakers. Just inform the Conference finished for this motion and motion 49 has been withdrawn we'll be moving onto motion 52 which is continued with this afternoon's business.

Brenda Irvine, ATGWU

Brenda Irvine, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union supporting motion 48. President, Brothers and Sisters I first joined my union in 1983 and at my first Conference I spoke on low pay and here we are in 2005 and I am still speaking on low pay. I work in contract catering and prior to TUPE I had to continuously re-apply for my job every time there was a change of contract at my place of employment, always successfully but always at a lower rate of pay. One of these contract catering companies, once they learned that the staff were unionised and that I was the shop steward I was sacked. I will not name that company I will only say that most of the delegates here have bought coffee in the foyer of this building. We must be grateful for the TUPE regulations which protects our jobs and for the introduction of the national minimum wage but I would like to say that most contract companies appear to be dyslexic because to read minimum wage as maximum wage. Yesterday we debated privatisation, let me tell you colleagues that privatisation and low pay go hand in hand. Please support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleagues.

Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON

President, Delegates, Thomas Mahaffy, UNISON supporting motion 48 and speaking to the sections report on poverty. Those in power in Northern Ireland have to often marginalised effective debate on poverty. Current policy is no exception. Congress must continue to lobby Government on a number of fronts, we need a cross department anti-poverty strategy that really does recognise the integral link between low pay poverty, social exclusion and poor health. A Bill of Rights must include the right to work, the right to health and the right to be free from poverty. Health inequalities must be tackled and services made more accessible to poor and disadvantaged groups, only then can we start to challenge the scandal where 25% of our population continue to live in poverty and 50% of our children experience its effects and the life expectancy of a member of the traveller community is 15 years less than that of a settled person. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Thomas. Any more speakers to motion 48. Okay. Can I put motion 48 to the floor, those for please show, those against, abstentions. Unanimously passed. Motion 49 has been withdrawn by Galway Trades Council so I want to

move on to motion 52. Motion 52 to 56 will be taken in common debate so the movers of 53, 54, 55 and 56 please come up to the front. Go ahead colleague.

Audrey Stewart, Ulster Teachers' Union

Audrey Stewart, Ulster Teachers' Union. President, Delegates, five portions of fruit and veg a day, this is the healthy way. Did we really need the well known chef Jamie Oliver to highlight the necessity of healthy eating and in particular the provision of healthy school meals. We didn't but the Government did. In order to be goaded and shamed into action. Jamie has raised awareness and a start has been made, now we need see further action in the provision of improved school meals, healthy lifestyle programmes and the increased provision of PE specialist teachers in primary schools. You may have viewed a recent programme in ITV's Tonight series entitled Food on the Brain. An experiment was carried out by changing the diet of three very disruptive pupils from junk food to a health balanced diet. Leading nutritionist Patrick Holford had discovered all three boys had been consuming large amount of hidden sugar and were suffering from allergies to milk products and to gluten, intolerances linked to aggression and poor concentration. After just one month on the new diet the boys reported feeling less tired, could concentrate better and their behaviour had improved immensely. Mr Holford pinpointed an imbalance in brain chemistry caused by the wrong diets eaten by so many of our young people. Awareness of the effect of giving children fish oil supplements has also been highlighted in the press. Recent evidence of improvement caused by such supplements or foods rich in omega 3 fats was recently reported when researchers from Oxford University carried out a study involving more than one hundred British children who were battling with physical coordination problems. The pupils were given daily supplements rich in omega 3 essential fats that are vital to brain development. 40% of the pupils demonstrated a significant improvement in concentration and behaviour. All of us as parents and teachers are aware of the different lifestyles of children today compared to our childhoods. Many children today spend far too many hours sitting in front of televisions, computers, DVD players etc. and while the educational benefit of these devices cannot be denied it is obvious that many children do not participate in as much physical activity as we did in the not distance past when much of our entertainment included physical exercise. We as a union are demanding that the Government takes urgent proactive measures to provide healthy school meals, healthy lifestyle programmes and an increased provision of primary school PE specialists. As a teachers union we also care about the well-being of our members, teachers have a very unique role to play and we are now seeing through a recent survey that 50% of teachers are seeing their job as stressed or very stressed. Stress is harmful when the well-being to manage it is absent. The shocking extend of this stress has been highlighted and a teacher support group has been set up. The funding for this teacher support group is going to be withdrawn in September. We urge that the Government sees fit to fund this strategy. I beg to move this motion. Thank you

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague. Secunder. Formally second. Move to motion 53 In the name of PCSU.

Barney Long, PCS

President, Conference, Barney Long, Public Commercial Services Union moving motion 53. All of our members who deal directly with the public face, on a daily basis, aggressive and violent behaviour, they're sworn at, threatened and some cases attacked and injured. The way the law currently deals with anyone found guilty of assaulting one of our members is more or less the same as if a member of the public were attacked in the street, no more or no less. At the minute civil servants do not attract any additional protection from the law which seems absurd as our members are in the frontline representing authority. You know in your various unions that this associated with the work that you and the dangers that you face that's why I ask you to support the motion in calling for the law to change to give all our members extra protection. Why should health and safety legislation and the regulation help the employers comply with the law by introducing control measures aimed at protecting our members. The problem is no matter what control measures are put in place in the workplace they can always be overcome by the determined abuser or attacker. To give some background drawn that's from violence at work by Ann Upton and the British Crime Survey of 2002-3. 1.7% of worker adults were the victims of one or more violent incidents at work, 376,000 workers had experienced a least one incident of violence at work. There were 849,000 incidents of violence at work comprising of 431, 000 assaults and 418,000 threats. 67% of workers who had face to face contact with the public said they'd not received any form of training in how to deal with threatening behaviour. Over 42% of assaults at work resulted in some type of injury to the victim. Victims of actual or threatened violence at work say that....

(tape changed)

..... I have no doubt that most of the employers want to prevent all sorts of attacks on our members and we must appreciate that but we also need to encourage the employers to take these attacks seriously and back the member if a court case results. For too long the employers preferred to take the side of the defender and won't listen to real concerns or practical suggestions. Those are the figures that have been reported, which is possibly only the tip of the iceberg as some people fear recrimination and fear losing their job for reporting. The motion calls upon Congress to enter into a campaign of zero tolerance against workplace violence, to encourage unions to negotiate with respect to employers

that attacks on our members are treated the same way as attacks on our police forces, and also to actively encourage union members to report such attacks or threats. Civil servants keep the country running and provide a service to Government yet still we are faced with the appalling statistics that I have demonstrated. Please agree with me that we deserve this extra protection. We are not paid to take the abuse that's why this motion calls for more awareness by the employer that the problem is real, more warnings to potential offenders and most of all more protection for our members. Please support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder for motion 53 – formally seconded. Mover to motion 54, Waterford Trades Council.

Roy Hallissey, Waterford Council of Trade Unions

Roy Hallissey, Waterford Council of Trade Unions to move motion 54. The Irish health service is increasingly based on an apartheid system, rooted in an ability to pay and geographical location. This is particularly the case in cancer treatment. One in four people in Ireland die from cancer. In a generation one in three of us will contract cancer, it's the biggest health issue facing us at the moment. The situation is made worse by a Government which is more intent on incremental privatisation of the health service than actually dealing with the situation of providing adequate treatment for patients. Ireland has one of the worst records on cancer treatment in the EU. We come thirteenth out of fifteen EU countries. In the South-East the Waterford Council of Trade Unions have been in the forefront of leading the campaign for a radiotherapy unit in the South-East. We've had work stoppages, major protests of 15,000 people to ensure that all three modalities of cancer treatment – radiotherapy, chemotherapy and surgery are located on one area in the South-East in Waterford Regional Hospital. At the moment only two of those modalities are in the Waterford Regional Hospital. This means that cancer patients have to travel to Dublin, a 200 mile round journey every single day for five minutes of treatment. I don't need to tell you the effect this has on people's health, on their emotional well-being at a time when they're very ill. It's the same case for the North-East. The Government has ignored the need for regional cancer treatment areas in favour of super regional cancer services in Dublin, Cork and Galway. As I said this means a 200 mile round journey for cancer patients from the South-East and North-West. 50% of the cancer patients in the South-East require radiotherapy. Only 20% actually receive it. This means a 20% greater mortality rate for the area with cancer rates. This is absolute discrimination in terms of geographical location. We heard yesterday in the debate on privatisation that the reason why

the Government won't locate radiotherapy in the South-East is because of the population base, there are not enough people there. But now two private radiotherapy units are being built in Waterford. I think this is a prime example of the Government deliberately running down the health service in order to facilitate privatisation and facilitate private money coming in. I think Congress and the Irish trade union movement should lead the fight against this and I ask delegates to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Have we got a seconder for motion 54 – formally seconded. I move to motion 55, IBOA.

Larry Broderick, IBOA

Delegates, Larry Broderick, General Secretary IBOA the Finance Union. In addressing this motion delegates could I first of all identify surprise, astonishment and disappointment that in the documentation issue to this Conference reference was made as one of the places of interest in Belfast was the Northern Bank, Donegall Square West. This particular bank was the subject of a major raid recently that has been sensationalised right across the world. But in real terms colleagues, our members and their families were threatened, were under huge pressure from paramilitary organisations and I think it is very, very sad indeed that Congress should be highlighting this glorified tourist sight and given the question of paramilitaries and not recognising the major difficulties our members faced in relation to that matter. For many colleagues in this Conference that may very well seem a trivial matter, but for my members in this industry and particularly in Northern Ireland who, as a result of that particular robbery, have had major impact in terms of their jobs, major impact in going to work on a daily basis. In the past 12 months colleagues it is fair to say that the number of bank robberies, raids, hijackings and kidnappings in our industry has increased quite dramatically. The health and safety of our members have been put, as indeed other colleagues and trade unions, under major threat and one of the focuses in relation to those threats has been cost cutting by profitable financial institutions. It is important colleagues in supporting this resolution that we identify very clearly that what we're about it putting workers' safety first, not putting profit first in the financial services industry.

In relation to the strategy identified under this resolution, there is need for a fundamental focus in our industry of addressing the challenges that face our industry because of these activities. We've been engaging with Government Ministers in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland looking for a forum whereby our members, where Congress, where customers can come together

with industry and with Government to address these issues and I ask for this resolution to be supported in full and I ask for Congress to direct its attention where it should be in relation to our colleagues that work in the industry. Thank you very much indeed.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Have we a seconder for that motion – formally seconded. Can I move to motion 56 in the name of MANDATE.

Mary Larkin, MANDATE

Mary Larkin, MANDATE trade union proposing motion 56. Delegates, since Easter I know of two stores that have been held up at gunpoint and shots have been fired. In both cases the stores remained open and trading and the staff were expected to continue working. Would you like that to be your working environment? Would you find that acceptable from your employer? These may seem like extreme examples yet statistics show that for every minute of every working day a retail worker is exposed to violence, either verbal or physical. I challenge any delegate here to walk into any retail outlet and ask a sales assistant if they've ever been a victim of verbal or physical abuse, and I guarantee you you'd be told of not one but several incidences. Then ask them what their employer did about it, and I bet the answer will be "nothing", because they're expected to grin and bear it, because the employers support the concept that the customer is always right. You would not accept it in your workplace delegates, yet retail workers are expected to accept it in theirs. I don't know when the culture was developed that it was right to abuse retail workers but I know when it's going to stop, right here and right now.

MANDATE trade union calls on the Executive Council to support our campaign to urge employers and the Health and Safety Authority to make it a priority to stamp out all forms of abuse for all workers. We do not accept Minister Killeen's response to the problem when he suggested we call the Gardai when workers were abused. This is a reaction after the abuse has occurred. We ask Congress to support us for our demands for all workplaces to be safe where such actions cannot take place. Retail workers like everybody else are entitled to a safe workplace. MANDATE trade union calls on the Government and the employers to join in talks with this union to develop clear guidelines that are proactive, not reactive to protect retail workers in Ireland. MANDATE will vigorously pursue this motion. Retail workers will no longer meekly accept abuse as part of their daily routine. I ask every delegate here to defend the dignity of retail workers. When you're in company and you hear someone bragging about how they sorted a shop worker out by giving them a piece of their mind, remind them that that shop

worker is a co-worker and deserves respect, not scorn. And finally delegates, when you use the term 'shelf stacker' as a comparator to see how low you go, remember those shelf stackers are our members and we don't hold them in such low esteem. Our members are entitled to the protection, dignity and respect that this motion proposes. Delegates I ask you to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder for motion 56? Formally seconded. We are now into open debate, speakers to the motions please.

Belinda Sharkey, UNISON

Belinda Sharkey, UNISON supporting motions 52 to 56. During 2004 UNISON Northern Ireland have again been at the forefront of a campaign to challenge the attacks on public sector workers across the U.K. We have particularly highlighted the disturbing and growing level of attacks here in Northern Ireland. UNISON members have been engaged in a series of public protests at the attacks on our members in the health, community care and education sectors. As an employee in the education sector the zero tolerance message is beginning to filter through to our employer. We will no longer tolerate physical violence, verbal abuse and threats. We demand that all employers take responsibility for this issue by having clear guidelines and policy for reporting attacks, by completing risk assessments and by providing appropriate and adequate training for all staff to ensure their safety and provide for a quality work life. Please support the motions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, next speaker.

Joe Houlihan, INO

Joe Houlihan, Irish Nurses Organisation supporting all the motions, but in particular no. 56 by MANDATE, it's a very good motion. I'm an A & E nurse, I have been for nearly ten years and I have been punched, kicked, spat at, I've been threatened with syringes, knives, colleagues have had guns, knives – you think it, it's happened within hospitals in the South. So this motion itself calls for violence in the workplace to become a priority objective for the Health and Safety Authority and a campaign and guidelines in particular for employers whose workers are exposed to the threat of such violence. Recently I highlighted a potential security risk to an employer and their response was "sure we'll wait until

something happens”, and these employers are getting away with that not because they have become more confident because we are weakened because of *Sustaining Progress* and they feel more confident, aggressive and unitarist. So it’s a very good motion MANDATE and well done. Please support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers?

Ann Martin, INO

Ann Martin, Irish Nurses Organisation supporting motions 52 to 56 but speaking specifically to motion 54. Cancer, the word which above all others causes the gut to knot. The treatment of cancer has been very well researched, with sufferers willingly submitting to additional tests and treatments in the hope that they will be a survivor and providing better treatment options for the future. To survive a sufferer needs to be treated in a unit which applies best practice guidelines. What are they? Best practice guidelines include having one unit on one site, preliminary diagnostic clinical equipment and facilities, appropriately experienced medical diagnosticians, histology departments, surgery facilities, oncology and radiology departments. All of these groups need to follow a plan, working together, conferring with each other and devising the best method of treatment for the specific type of tumour from which the person is suffering. When the person is undergoing treatment they need a strong structures support system. A supportive therapeutic team can only be effective in operating from a well-structures base. Funding of such services is very costly. So is the cost of debility and death, resulting from ineffective and partially effective treatment which we know from research outcomes are not as good. We know what the best practice is. I say to this Conference we should demand the implementation of regionalised fully funded cancer centres. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers?

Brendan Hayes, SIPTU

Brendan Hayes, SIPTU supporting all of the motions and speaking particularly to motions 55 and 56. SIPTU as well represents a range of workers in quite a broad range of industries that deal directly with the public, the health services, the fire services, the retail sector and quite a number of other areas as well. Our members too have experienced the kind of vicious assaults that other people

here have described. Our members too have been the victim of that kind of brutalised attack that has put their own lives and the lives of other people in jeopardy. But in the past while there's been a particularly pernicious development where organised criminals are now taking workers and their families hostage and threatening their very lives if workers don't co-operate with organised gangs. Workers deserve better than that. This Congress has stood up to paramilitaries in the history of this movement. This movement is going to have to lend its voice to those workers now and stand on their side and stand up to the criminal gangs. I ask you to support these resolutions.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, next speaker.

John Golden, CWU

John Golden from the Communication Workers Union speaking on motions 52 and 54. Basically colleagues in regard to the actual classroom situation we had a major issue in West Donegal where I come from. The parents refused to let their children go to a certain school for three solid weeks last year in regard to rodents that were in the school, so the safety of the children there was paramount and it's nice to see the parents actually standing up for a change. The second one was actually in the headlines in the Galway constituency where there were teachers using the toilet to actually teach children. Now I think in this day and age that's deplorable.

In regard to motion 54, the whole concept of, again from the North-West issue, there are major problems where they're going to close down an oncology department in the General Hospital Letterkenny where people would have to travel 270 miles to Dublin and I should say that's from Letterkenny only, some of these patients are bussed in at 6 o'clock in the morning to get the main service to Dublin and you're talking about patients who have cancer and are on treatment having to leave home at half five, quarter to six to be in Letterkenny to get the main bus. I think it's deplorable, it's a fair journey for the fit and healthy people like ourselves, so I think we should stand up and be counted on this one. Thank you delegates.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you John, any more speakers?

Maria Morgan, NIPSA

Conference, President, Brothers and Sisters, Maria Morgan, NIPSA seeking remission on motion 53. Working in a benefit office in an area of high unemployment in any part of Ireland we deal with the most vulnerable in society in terms of economic depravation and poverty. Difficult benefit decisions have to be delivered to those most in need and who have nowhere else to turn. Therefore, if a valid incident develops, adopting this motion would mean that any such attach would be dealt with under the structure of the Police Act and would result in mandatory prison sentences. NIPSA seek remission on this motion as we believe this is not the appropriate starting point and wider options need to be developed for more appropriate action. The most vulnerable in society should not be used by Government to shift the focus from under-funding in the public service and from the unjustifiably low levels of benefit allowances. Any attack on our members should be properly dealt with but each case deserves to be looked at individually and given individually and given individual consideration, not a police state reaction. Please support remission.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers? Okay, we'll move to put the motions to the floor. Remember there's a call for remission on motion 53.

Barney Lawn, PCS

Barney Lawn, PCS, right of reply. The real issue of the motion is protecting public servants. We are prepared to remit with the following, we recognise that there might be concerns to the solution to the problem and indeed our own Conference has similar reservations in using the Police Act as the solution. But in acknowledging that there is a problem, our Conference remitted to the National Executive to find alternative solutions to this very real problem and we would seek ICTU to support a similar line and explore all options to seek protection for our members.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Are you accepting remission?

Barney Lawn, PCS

No, I'm remitting with that statement.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Okay, that's fine. Any more speakers on motions 52 to 56? We'll put 52 to the floor, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions – passed unanimously. Motion 53 is remitted. Motion 54, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions – passed. Motion 55, those in favour, those against, abstentions – passed. Motion 56, those in favour, those against, abstentions – passed. We'll move on now to motion 57, CSP.

Catherine Elliman, CSP

Catherine Elliman, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists proposing motion 57. President, delegates, the CSP is asking Congress to call for a ban on smoking in public places and workplaces, including bars and restaurants as a necessary step to combating the dangers of passive smoking. For more than a decade convincing scientific evidence has been available to demonstrate that exposure to second hand smoke both harms and worsens existing health problems. It hits the vulnerable hardest – children, pregnant women and people with cardiovascular and respiratory disorders. For most people public places and workplaces are the main source of exposure to second hand smoke. The UK is rapidly falling behind other countries in its provision to protect non-smokers. Respiratory diseases are extremely common in Northern Ireland. A recent survey of respiratory physiotherapists revealed that 50% of their workload is spend treating patients with chronic obstructive airways disease, a disease directly related to smoking. In 2002 there were 30,000 admissions to hospitals here with respiratory conditions, equating to 180,000 bed days at a cost of about £50 million to the health service. Smoking and exposure to secondary smoke is a significant causal factor in the development and exacerbation of respiratory disease. A ban on smoking in public places and workplace would undoubtedly have a major on efforts to tackle respiratory disease by protecting the health and safety of those employed in these industries and encouraging those who smoke to stop. Earlier this year physiotherapists delivered over 500 responses to the Department of Health here in Northern Ireland calling for a ban on smoking as we see the harmful effects that smoking has on patients on a daily basis. There is an urgent need for decisive action on this issue. Legislation to ban smoking in public places and workplaces should be introduced and we challenge the Minister for Health here to make that leap and follow the example of our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland. Please support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Is there a seconder – are you seconding Sean? Go ahead.

Sean Gregson, UNISON

Sean Gregson, UNISON supporting motion 57. President, Congress, I'm fortunate enough to work in a working environment for a union who has been proactive in stopping smoking within its offices. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Belfast City Council in their proactive initiative about banning smoking within all their buildings. However, I feel that this is not enough. Smoking just doesn't just impact or affect people who are smoking but anybody who comes into contact with smokers. Smoking and secondary smoking is responsible for high cases of lung cancer and emphysema. The Department of Health in Northern Ireland at the present minute in time are waging a media campaign to make parents aware of the effect that smoking has on their children. This campaign is an excellent campaign but it needs to be taken further. I think people need to be made aware of the long-term effect on themselves. I call for you to support this motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Sean. Any more speakers?

Eddie Cassidy, MANDATE

Eddie Cassidy, MANDATE trade union. Mr President and delegates, cancer, stroke, heart disease, respiratory problems, all caused by passive smoking and I mean that are caused to people that don't smoke or never have smoked. Last year 617 died from passive smoking in the workplace. 2,700 died under the age of 65 from passive smoking and 8,000 over 65 died from passive smoking, 3,000 of those died by stroke and by heart disease. Think of our slogan here, why not have a quality time, quality workplace, where the air quality is good, not having to work in a haze whether it be an eight or a ten hour shift where you've constantly got to breathe in somebody else's regurgitated smoke. The health of a bar or hospitality worker is every bit as important as any worker. Please support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers to motion 57? I'll put motion 57 to the floor, those in favour please show, those against - one, abstentions. Okay I want to move now to motion 58, Dignity at Work.

Aodha McCay (NASUWT)

President, Delegates, this is called coming in under the wire, how many people want to go for their dinner than listen to me, don't answer that. Bullying and harassment constitute a threat to an employee's health, safety and well being. That's a quotation from the Northern Ireland Teachers Dignity at Work Policy which we hope to adopt soon. Management bullying is with us in many places with a style of management which repeatedly denigrates the workforce with a culture of threats and reprisals. All of this is a major cause of workplace stress and as a result many workers fall ill to stress related illnesses. For some it means an end to their working life. In my own profession of teaching the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland research shows that the biggest cause of staff absenteeism is stress related illness. Much of this stress is caused by inappropriate styles of management involving bullying and harassment. This style of management is unacceptable behaviour and must be put a stop to. It can be addressed if all employers adopt dignity at work policies. Let's get this straight. If you are a manager and you have to resort to bullying and harassment to try to get an effective workplace then you have categorically failed. You are the failure. To borrow from a headline in today's newspaper, the real test of leadership is whether people are following. Many management's managers who bully don't recognise themselves - me, a bully, never. I had one case where a manager dealing with a member who was being bullied said "that's me, that's just how I go on", I soon informed him that he would have to go on a different way. The managers who bully have to be persuaded that they have a statutory duty of care to their employees and that their workers are legally entitled to be treated with dignity in their workplace. There should go out a message to all managers who try to lead by bullying and harassing employees – you will be faced down by effective trade union organisations who will insist that health and safety legislation is upheld, we will insist that employers' duty of care is maintained and we will insist that every worker is rightfully treated with dignity work. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Seconder?

Arthur McGarrigle, NASUWT

President, could I suggest that being restricted to one minute to second this very important motion is tantamount to management bullying (applause) thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Let me say something to you colleague, we're not bullying anybody. It's a Standing Orders Report that was put and Conference accepted.

Arthur McGarrigle, NASUWT

I've only got one minute, let me speak. This is more management bullying, try and stop the person from speaking. At worst this is management bullying, at best it's management farce. I'm sure some of you will remember a programme on TV many many years ago called Beadle's About, Jeremy Beadle was in it. The programme was called "Watch out Beadle's about", we let's have posters in the workplace, let's have fluorescent signs, let's have car stickers, let's have labels and whatever else we can think of in every workplace with this very simple message – watch out there's a bully about.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague. Just to re-iterate what I was saying, that Standing Orders Report is put to Conference and they accept the report and that report determines the times we speak. It's what's commonly known as democracy (laughs). Next speaker.

Madeleine Spiers, INO

President, delegates, I would like to support motion 58 and I'd like to put a rider onto it. In the South, I know the IMO two years ago at this Conference asked for a whistleblowing act, a whistleblowing motion was put forward, so that people who wished to speak out about miscreant organisations would be protected in law and we do not have that. In Britain there's the Public Disclosure Act, twelve hundred cases have come before it and it came out of a very difficult case in Bristol where a very brave doctor by the name of Steven Walson exposed where children were being killed and severely damaged by such poor care and everyone knew, doctors and nurses, and nobody spoke out because there was a club culture and it went on for years. There is a club culture in Ireland and we have had Leas Cross and we will have other scandals coming down the road. I ask ICTU to address this issue of the whistleblowers underpinning
(tape changes)

Kitty Kane, NASUWT

President, Conference, this is supplementary to what Arthur said, not his accusation about democratic bullying but his call for us to highlight it at every point. I volunteer as a PR advocate in mental health and I'm from NASUWT also

and I meet at least one person per week who has been crippled by mental breakdown caused by stressed work. Not from the amount of work they had to do generally, most often it's from the ways that they are directed to perform their duties. And the adoption of dignity at work policies will of course be a step forward, allowing bullied people a structure within which to seek a stop to the bullying. But most people are not aware that it is bullying that's happening until it's too late, and when he said to highlight it we do have to keep in mind that we need active anti-bully awareness raising as well. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, any more speakers to motion 58? Can I put motion 58 to the floor, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions – it's passed unanimously. Thank you. Colleagues, that's the end of our business for today you'll be glad to hear and we'll be starting in the morning at 9.30 and we'll be starting with motion 59 on care which will be moved on behalf of the Executive Council, thank you.

Friday 24 June 2005

09.30 – 11.30

(Motions 73 – 76)

(Principal EC Report reference: Section 4, Chapter 1 Europe and the World”.)

European Union

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

All I can say on the last morning of Conference, there's less here but you are not looking any better. Conference, as I said yesterday, I just want to explain the order of business. We're still under the Standing Orders Report No. 5 and we'll be starting off with motion 59 which will clear up that section. It's being moved by Catherine Byrne on behalf of the Executive Council. We'll also be then moving to what is the normal order of business for today, after 59 we'll be going to 73 to 80 and then when we complete that we'll be going back to the rest of yesterday's business which is motion 60 to 72. Okay Conference, thank you Catherine.

Catherine Byrne, Executive Council

Thank you President and on behalf of the Executive Council moving motion 59 which address the rights and conditions for care workers in our society. What this motion seeks to do is to put those workers who in the large part are women, a huge majority of them who care for our children, either in homes or in community settings, who look after the elderly in our communities and again in formal settings and the disabled, to put these people at the centre of our efforts and our goals of building a quality care infrastructure in Ireland to make sure that they don't get forgotten in the debate around care. I suppose you could say that yesterday the focus of our debate on this area presented in the report by Paula was on the provision of services to ensure the best developmental environment for children, to enable active aging for our elderly and to secure greater independence for people with disabilities. Today let's just swing right up to the heart of the debate the needs of those workers, those women who deliver care in our communities, and we're talking about home helpers, crèche workers, domestic workers providing home based care services, childcare workers, hospital attendants, classroom assistants, special needs assistants, to mention but a few. And while some great work has been done by UNISON, by IMPACT

and by SIPTU, not to mention others, to organise, to recruit and to expose the exploitation of these workers, great work has been done to establish pay scales and to secure basic conditions of employment for some of these workers. We know that this emerging sector in our economy undervalues and exploits tens of thousands of women who are in the main the carers in this sector. The e helps who are working for €2 an hour, the domestic workers, often migrant women working around the clock combining domestic and care work in the homes, always on call, some of them, we've heard stories that are true and real that would shock you, sleeping on mats in nurseries, women sacked when they get pregnant, women who've travelled thousands of miles around the globe to come and care for our children while they leave their own children at home, and the story goes on.

The ongoing and immediate challenge for this movement is to make visible those workers through recruitment, through awareness campaigns, but above all trying to access rights for them. Congress has already taken a decision to try and secure a joint labour mechanism for domestic workers which could define the duties of carers, which could limit working hours, which could set out different gradients of pay, that's the short term objective, but there are longer term objectives. We need the development of a monitoring and audit system to allow for collection of data on these workers. We need the introduction and resourcing of mandatory training for all formal care workers. We need the development of guidelines and the provision of training for these workers. Everybody in this hall knows the joy and the hard labour that's involved in caring. Everyone of us has either been a carer or we have delivered care in our families or to our friends. It's part and parcel of our lives that we act as carers. We have a responsibility to make sure that those people who provide a service to our community, a vital and critical service, that they are treated properly, that the place that they have on the pyramid of values in our society, which is right at the bottom, is inverted and that they move right up to where they belong and that will be done when we have proper pay and conditions for those workers. I urge you to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

The motion is formally seconded, speakers?

Sean Gibson, UNISON

Sean Gibson, UNISON speaking in support of motion 59. President, Conference, I'm speaking in support of motion 59. Everybody is aware with the increase in population and the fact that people are living a lot longer, more and more pressure is being put on the care sector to deliver and more and more pressure is being put on without the same type of resources needed to fund it. The use of public sector companies by the Health Trust to drive down the hourly

rate of care workers has to be exposed. I could give you an example of the Ulster Hospital Trust. Within 20 mile radius of the Ulster Hospital Trust there are 20 private sector companies operating with using mainly migrant labour, migrant women, working 10 hours or more a day. These private sector companies refuse to introduce family friendly conditions and the pay, basically the minimum wage and lower if they can get away with it, this is a diabolical disgrace and I call on Conference to expose practices like that. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Sean, any more speakers to motion 59? I'm putting the motion to Conference, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, passed unanimously. Can I move to motion 73, which has been withdrawn, so I'll move to motion 74.

Michael O'Reilly, ATGWU

O'Reilly, Amalgamated Transport moving motion 74 on the EU Constitution. President and comrades, we are proposing, and this proposal is about rejecting the EU Constitution and in doing so we are saying that this Constitution now should not be put to a referendum. And the reason we're saying that is because there is no Constitution because the rules of this debate state that if it's rejected by any country therefore the Constitution is gone. And we think any engagement in trying to introduce aspects of this by the back door or anywhere else will lead to more cynicism and apathy in respect of our situation in Europe. The French and the Dutch voters have emphatically rejected this Constitution as drafted. This cannot be put in the same way as the normal debate about Europe historically. This has been a very different debate, because the French and the Dutch are the founding members of Europe and this debate was very much about the neo-liberal agenda in those countries. It was very much about protecting jobs, services, it was very much about protecting the quality of life. As the French Foreign Minister said, the French reject the idea of endless toil to comply with globalisation, they like their holidays, they like the 35 hour week, they like the health service that they have. I think we would all like that too, I think that's the kind of Europe we want to defend and not simply go along with a situation where the big multi-nationals are dominating this debate. So for that reason I think they rejected the Constitution. Now a lot of commentators have made comment in relation to this and they paint this rejection of Europe and this rejection of the Constitution as dark and racist and nationalist and backward but the opposite is the truth. There is hope in this rejection because it is the people of France and the Dutch saying that they want a different kind of Europe, a

people's Europe, a Europe where the voice of ordinary people and trade unionists can be heard, and it was the left overwhelmingly that rejected the Constitution in these countries and we have to learn from that.

The last thing I would say is this, I hope that there's going to be a vigorous debate in this movement about what kind of Europe we want, and at the core of it is this, if people want to privatise our services, if people want to nationalise our industries, if people want to de-nationalise our industries or whatever they want to do, the core of it has to be this, the basis of all democracy is anybody makes a law, anybody implements a policy, you have to be able to sack them. We can't sack the European rules that come down on us and we have to make room for democracy in it, so this is a big debate, it's a debate about democracy, it's a debate about the future of Europe and it's a debate about the quality of life for trade unionists and their families and to that extent I think we should oppose the Constitution.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Mick, are you remitting the motion?

Michael O'Reilly, ATGWU

I'm remitting the motion on the basis that we're going to have a continuing debate in the movement on this topic and I hope if we're going to make a decision on it, it's going to be made not by the Executive Council but at a Special Delegate Conference if necessary.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Okay, thank you. So motion 74 is remitted. Can we move on to 75, can I ask the movers of motions and seconders to please get down to the front?

Patricia McKeown, UNISON

President, Conference, Patricia McKeown, UNISON to move motion 75 on the Services Directive, and I think it follows on very neatly from what Mick has just said in relation to the previous one. I'm hoping it's an academic motion now because serious work has been done to undermine the draft Services Directive, a Directive which has the very strong support of the UK and the very strong support of the Irish Government and is designed to attack once again our public services is designed to give effect to gaps. If we've learned anything about Europe it's that motions, even constitutions, being rejected doesn't mean they're

dead. The capacity for those who are not friends of workers or our movement to bring these proposals back in other forms is outstanding.

I want to commend to the work done by our General Secretary, David Begg and the work done by John Monks and the ETUC in seriously undermining the draft Directive. I want to commend the work done by my own union which petitioned Europe to say that the Directive in its previous form was going to extend, compound and deepen discrimination against women workers across Europe and of course one of the most hideous elements of the proposal was country of origin. The very thing we've heard several times at this Conference. The idea that the movement of labour across Europe means that workers from countries who do not enjoy the terms and conditions of employment of workers for example in the UK or Ireland will be forced onto the terms and conditions of their parent country, and that of course is a deliberate exercise in trying to completely undermine public services and public service workers right across Europe. I'm hoping that we don't have to redouble our efforts to kill that Directive but I suspect that we will have to, I think Congress is going to have to be highly vigilant in the coming months to ensure that it doesn't come back in the hideous form it was originally composed in. So I'm asking for your support.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Patricia, there's an amendment to this.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON

And we want to say that we're accepting the amendment and supporting the position that's been put forward by RMT.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, is there a seconder? Formally. Speaking to the amended motion.

Paddy Healy, TUI

Paddy Healy, TUI supporting the motion. In relation to marketisation and privatisation there are worldwide plans in relation to the marketisation and privatisation of education, beginning with the third level sector and extending to further education and also perhaps to upper secondary education. This general thrust is coming through the OECD and through the world trade talks and the GATS agreements. Now we in relation to the Services Directive, through the European education unions, we sought the exemption of education from the

Directive and we didn't get a clear answer and that is why we put together a campaign to pressurise governments on the issue. We took it up with our own Government in Dublin, I'm afraid we got no commitment whatsoever. Because of the activity of our colleagues in other countries, particularly the French, German and Scandinavian unions, we are hearing better news in relation to the exemption of education, but I want to express very, very strong solidarity with UNISON in relation to this motion and to congratulate UNISON on their petition to it and I think that we have to get into a situation where here in Ireland that we are exerting pressures so that the Irish government, that we don't have to depend on the German Government and on the French Government to beat back this rash of privatisation. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Paddy. Any more speakers to motion 75?

Blair Horan, CPSU

Blair Horan, Civil and Public Service Union supporting motion 75. Delegates, the Services Directive in its original form I think represents the high point of the neo-liberal agenda in Europe. As part of a European Public Service Union delegation last Monday I met with Commissioner McCreevy to discuss the Services Directive. He indicated that he was open to amendments through the European Parliament in relation to the country of origin principle and also in terms of public services as we understand them here in Ireland. So like John Monks said, I think it's pretty clear that this Services Directive will be substantially amended. But the point is delegates the constitutional treaty on Europe actually is an advance in terms of public services, while I share some of the sentiments that Mick O'Reilly expressed, I draw the opposite conclusion. The treaty is a row back on the neo-liberal agenda and will actually advance the position of the public realm and public services and I think that's important to recognise as well delegates.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Blair. Any more speakers to motion 75? Can I put motion 75 to the floor please, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions – motion is passed. Can I move now to motion 76, GPMU.

Frank Barry, AMICUS

Conference, Frank Barry, AMICUS moving on behalf of the Graphical Paper and Media Union. Conference, like other people have referred already to the

Directive, I just want to make a few comments. As we all know, this Directive was deeply flawed, it threatened, and I think it's important to stress the point, it threatened the welfare of workers and consumers across the EU. It was supposed to sweep away the barriers to competition in the services sector, but the most important principle and the most pernicious aspect of the proposal was the country of origin principle. According to this principle, services could be across borders but the regulatory regime governing the activities of any country would be the regulations pertaining to the company's country of origin, not the country where the services are being provided and I think and we think that this is probably the most important point we could make. Putting it simply, if a company is registered in a country and provides a service in Ireland which is of low standards and poor conditions for workers then the only redress we can get is in the country of origin. So we would have a system of setting up head offices where there are poor standards, the lowest regulations and the worst conditions and protection for workers and following the protest from unions right across Europe our Commissioner has said, and somebody has already referred to it, the European Parliament has postponed if you like or deferred the Directive, probably on the basis that it is going to be brought back in a new form. But what he did say is that he did not want, or to hear from the Parliament or anybody else, the whole question of social dumping.

If we look at the principle of country of origin we don't believe it's dead, we think it's a principle that will be brought back in another format and that's if you like an area where we have to keep our eye on the ball. What we are asking for is if the Directive is brought back on board, we are asking that the incoming Executive and that Congress is ready to fight that battle again and ensure that we protect workers and consumers across the European Union. I ask you to support the motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Frank. Secunder? Formally seconded. Any speakers to motion 76? I put motion 76 to the floor, those in favour please show, against, abstentions – the motion is passed. Moving to motion 77, Assistance to Developing Countries, AHCPs.

Sean O'Riordain, AHCPs

Sean O'Riordain, Association of Higher and Civil Public Servants. You will recall that the President in his opening address to Conference pointed out that Ireland was now among the richest nations in the Earth and equally he spoke about the need for global solidarity and the manner in which millions in the Third World lived and died. Equally, the Treasurer in his report to Conference spoke about the enormous aid in the context of the Asian tsunami and I'm sure as individuals

and indeed within the workplace, in areas like the Civil Service Third World Fund, people make contributions and equally Congress in its negotiations with Government on a new programme will be talking about Ireland's aid to developing countries. The purpose of this motion is to ask the Council and Congress to look at arrangements to put in place a long-term strategic approach to development aid which would not just deal with emergency situations but would take a strategic view and will enable in a united and co-ordinated way contributions of workers through Congress to be lent to deal with emerging and ongoing emergency situations. We ask you to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, is there a seconder? Formally, speakers to motion 77.

Brian Moore, NIPSA

President, Conference, Brothers and Sisters, Brian Moore on behalf of NIPSA to ask you to remit the motion and I've got a very short time but why we're asking you to remit the motion is in the wording of the motion it's saying we're asking how best the trade union movement in partnership with the employers can contribute financially to providing assistance to developing countries. Now the speaker in support of the motion had no issue with what they're wanting to do but we feel that in just saying in association with employers is too restrictive and we need a wider remit and to give more flexibility in the whole debate of how we can adopt this approach with developing issues and projects. Because a number of unions have their own membership voluntary or direct contribution to schemes and they're not just with employers. So we're asking you to remit and bear with the reason I'm making, it's because it's actually to give more scope to the motion and not just to be in association with employers. Where that can be done, fine but we need to have a wider discussion on this. I'd ask you to remit, thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Under right to reply.

Sean O'Riordain, AHCPs

Delegates, the substance of this motion is about providing aid and we certainly have no difficulty in it being remitted as proposed to enable the matter to be addressed more fully.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

So you're accepting remission? Conference agrees to remission – thank you Conference. We'll move on to the next motion which is 78, in the name of UNISON, ICFTU.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON

President, Conference, Patricia McKeown, UNISON. You couldn't read this motion in three minutes, it's a really long one, it should have been two motions, but rules are rules and we didn't have another motion to put down so I want to make the key points. I want to say first of all that I've always been very proud of the role that's been played by our movement in taking seriously its responsibilities for workers and for people right across this planet. It's a proud tradition of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. I'm also very proud of the fact that Congress speedily signed up to the Making Poverty History Campaign. We do live in very difficult, very challenging times not so much for us but for about 95% of the rest of this planet. Congress is supporting the Make Poverty History Campaign effectively, many affiliates are also taking direct action, for example attending the demonstrations against G8 on the 2nd July but for those who can't Congress is taking part in the major events in Dublin on the 30th June and if you haven't seen that now, please note it now, please visit the website.

In addition to that, you'll see from the Executive Council Report that we also take seriously our responsibilities for the rest of the trade union movement on the planet. It's therefore very important that we're fully linked in to the international trade union movement and it is a source of some regret to me that circumstances dictated that we should disaffiliate from the ICFTU but the time is now right to go back in again. The ICFTU may in the past not have been as an effective a global trade union vehicle as we might have hoped but it has undergone radical changes. There is much we might be able to offer in support and solidarity to trade unions, particularly in the developing world but there is a hell of a lot more we have to learn from them in terms of how to organise and struggle and how to challenge when you really have no leverage at all and the ICFTU is beginning to become the genuine block of resistance to global capitalism. Therefore Congress, I ask for your support that we now immediately re-affiliate to ICFTU.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Is there a seconder? Formally. Speakers to motion 78.

Brendan Archbold, MANDATE

President, Brendan Archbold, MANDATE. Really in the absence of the time for the debate that perhaps some of us were anticipating I just want to take my 30 seconds or whatever it is just to plug the Dublin rally for the Make Poverty History event on Thursday June 30th at 6.30 in Parnell Square in Dublin. So really I would appeal to those of the few of you who are left here, your unions, your banners and your workers and your members at the rally on the 30th June. If you could make a special effort we'd be very grateful, I think it's very important. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Brendan. Any more speakers to motion 78?

Brian Moore, NIPSA

President, Conference, Brothers and Sister, Brian Moore on behalf of NIPSA to once again ask you to remit the motion. Patricia dealt with one aspect, there's two aspects we were asking you to remit and ask you to think about it carefully. Patricia related to the first reason was why ICTU came out of the ICFTU and we feel that to go back in immediately without due consideration, if the ICFTU has moved on it has and I'm accepting that to some extent, but if they've moved on that much we need to see the evidence for that and take careful consideration before we do go back in again. And I don't see any harm in looking at reasoned debate on that. The second point is actually financial, because it will cost, where's that coming from? Shall we come back in two years time and ask for a further increase above the normal increase in subscription fees, or if not does that impact on the resources that the ICTU has. So all these things need to be looked at. We're not saying no, don't do it, we're saying we need to have full consideration of all the issues and the two main areas I've talked about, so we'd ask you to please remit the motion. Thank you.

Dessie Donnelly, UNISON

President, Delegates, Dessie Donnelly from UNISON. I think this motion is quite straight forward. We talked throughout this week on globalisation, that nature of global capital and how it's attacking basic conditions for working classes on an international scale. Our resistance and our struggle must become international if we're going to effectively challenge this. ICFTU is becoming the recognised vehicle for doing that among the international trade union movement and I think

it's imperative that the Irish trade union movement re-affiliate to ICFTU and take part in that.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thanks Dessie, Patricia, right to reply.

Patricia McKeown, UNISON

Thank you President, delegates, the answer is no. We didn't disaffiliate from ICFTU because of detailed political analysis, it was housekeeping and it is absolutely true that re-affiliating will cost Congress money. Now we can't have our cake and eat it, I agree, but we passed motions at this Conference saying that we were going to redouble our efforts to organise the movement of workers on this island. That is our responsibility and the more people we recruit into the trade union movement the more money goes into the coffers of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the more money goes to our work on solidarity. So let's look at this the right way round, the positive way round, let's build our movement and build our international links.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

I call on the General Secretary, David Begg.

David Begg, General Secretary

President, colleagues, the Executive Council has asked me just to say a word on this in the context of the ICFTU. What Patricia said is quite right about the reasons for our actual suspension of affiliation and it is purely a financial matter. The difficulty is that it costs €50,000 a year to maintain our affiliation and our circumstances are such that we cannot do that at the moment. I think the first budgetary priority of Congress at present has to be in organising and the allocation of the resources to do that, the General Treasurer spoke about that in his opening remarks the other day. The second budgetary priority has to be the pension funds, both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. But there is no difference of principle as far as the Executive Council is concerned, we would very much like to be back in the ICFTU, it's a matter of personal regret actually that we had to take the course of action we had and we will certainly attempt to re-affiliate as soon as we possibly can but it definitely has to be seen in that budgetary context.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

We've had a move for remission – the Executive Council are supporting the motion with the caveats of the General Secretary put onto it. Those in favour of remission please show, those against. Those in favour of motion 78 please show, those against, abstentions. It's passed. We'll move on to motion 79, Rights of Palestinian People, Belfast and District Trades Council

Brian McKinney, Belfast Trades Council

Conference, brothers and sisters, Brian McKinney, Belfast Trades Council to move motion 79. The occupation is the root of all the problems in the Middle East, not my words, the words of the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem on Newsnight, timely enough, last night. Conference, brothers and sisters the trade union movement has a long and proud tradition of opposing oppression whether that oppression takes place through exploitation in the workplace or wherever human rights may be at risk. For many years now the human rights of Palestinians have been ignored by the Government of Israel and have been trampled into the dirt in the occupied territories by the Israeli Defence Force. In recent weeks it has become increasingly clear that despite spin to the contrary, even the planned pull out from Gaza by Sharon's government will not lift the boot from the throats of Palestinians. Houses vacated by illegal settlers are to be destroyed by the IDF and another wall is going to be built, one kilometre long, stretching out from the northern and southern borders of the Gaza Strip. The pull out will not mean an end to the occupation of Gaza, in fact all Gaza's borders will be patrolled by the Israeli Defence Force. One of the world's most densely populated areas has become Arab's biggest open prison. Human Rights Watch have been monitoring the huge co-ordinated and determined destruction carried out by the IDF along Gaza's southern border, particularly around the town of Rafa where nearly two-thirds of the almost three thousand homes destroyed in the last five years have been concentrated. That includes last May 2004, 298 houses in one month destroyed in Rafa. These demolitions, illegal according to international law, have left 20,000 of Rafa's population, one in ten, homeless and have resulted in dozens of deaths as Caterpillar D9 bulldozers have crashed into the bedrooms of Palestinians late at night and without warning.

Conference under the occupation is controlled by the occupier. Freedom of movement is at the behest of the IDF and one example of course, as mentioned earlier this week, is the numerous deaths of Palestinian women at checkpoints while in childbirth. It is timely that with Make Poverty History on the lips of Tony Blair, poverty has never been worse in the occupied territories. Closures, curfews, demolitions, checkpoints, the destruction of farm lands, the building of the apartheid wall and the destruction of economic infrastructures meant that over 75% of Palestinians live in poverty, that is living on under two dollars a day. Sixty per cent of these people rely on humanitarian aid and more than two-thirds

of those in poverty are children. According to the UN World Food Programme, hunger and malnutrition affects half of the population under eighteen years of age. Brothers and sisters it is for these reasons and many many others that there is a movement spreading around the world calling for sanctions against Israel. One of the biggest voices is being raised in South Africa, where groups from the Council of Churches to COSATU have fully endorsed the call. Conference, decades of struggle for justice in Palestine has been one of a huge inequality, perhaps sanctions may provide the space for Palestinians to demand their rights in terrain much more favourable to their struggle for freedom. I urge you to support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Have we got a seconder?

Dessie Donnelly, UNISON

President, delegates, Dessie Donnelly, UNISON calling on support for this motion. I think that the position of self-determination for the Palestinian people is the proper position for the trade union movement to take in this instance. The Palestinian people are in a situation that is largely devoid of hope or at least there is no clear domestic and internal strategy to overcome the Israeli government oppression of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian struggle must become international, not only through solidarity groups and we commend the work that they do, but the trade movement needs to become more active and play a larger role in raising the international pressure on the Israeli government. This motion is very basic and it must be followed through with intense lobbying and practical assistance that as trade unions and as workers we can all assist the Palestinian people in their struggle. We need to develop mechanisms whereby we can do that, I urge you to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Go ahead Eamon.

Eamon McCann, NUJ

If the strategies available to the Palestinian people in seeking liberation are very limited it would be a nonsense and obviously a nonsense for anyone to advise them to adopt peaceful and constitutional means, there are no constitutional mechanisms available to them, it would equally be facile and farcical to advise them to depend upon what we have come to call the international community

when it is self-evident that the mechanisms of the international community are not available to them either. United Nations resolutions supporting the rights of the Palestinian people are not worth the paper they are written on. The grotesque situation in the Middle East is illustrated by nothing better the fact that while the possibility that Iran might obtain nuclear weapons is a matter of intense international speculation and controversy and threat of sanctions, the fact that Israel already possesses nuclear weapons is not on anybody's agenda at all, indeed that the Israeli nuclear weapons are by convention not even subject to the examination of the International Atomic Energy Authority, in this situation the call for sanctions against Israel and the call for international solidarity in a practical way is one means of providing the Palestinian people with a certain leverage without which it is not our right or our moral entitlement to ask them to limit the means that they deploy to seek their own liberation. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Eamon, any more speakers to motion 79? Can I put the motion to Conference, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, it's passed unanimously. Can I move to motion 80 and just to remind Conference that after motion 80 we'll be moving back to motions 60 straight through to 72. I call on Cork Council of Trade Unions to move motion 80, Use of Shannon Airport. Is Cork Council of Trade Unions here? No, motion falls. Can I call Kay Garvey, Chair of Standing Orders.

Kay Garvey, Chair Standing Orders

Mr President, delegates, Standing Orders Committee Report No. 6. Standing Order Committee comprises of five places and two substitutes. Four nominations were received and are declared elected. One vacant position will be dealt with by the Executive Council. Standing Orders Committee is also glad to report that it's confidence in the co-operation of delegates has been honoured and no further limitations are required to the speaking times. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Is it agreed to accept the Standing Orders Report? Can I move to motion 60, Exploitation, in the name of SIPTU.

Jack O'Connor, SIPTU

President, delegates, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU moving motion No. 60. I won't take too much time delegates, we're all well aware here in this hall that despite the

much vaunted success of the economy in the Republic there is nonetheless a serious decline in labour standards overall, and the economy is infected by a growing culture of exploitation. We are all well aware as well that this is attributable to the rapid growth of the numbers in employment, the decline in trade union density and the increasingly laissez faire labour market policy promoted by the authorities. It's interesting by the way delegates to note that in this area of increasingly wanton lawlessness the number of prosecutions has actually been declining from 25 in 2002, to 20 in 2003, 14 in 2004 and only 2 so far this year. Now the motion before Conference envisages placing the trade union movement back at the centre of a workplace culture that is based on education, training and innovation, and placing it there in contrast to the race to the bottom culture that is rapidly developing there. I have no doubt delegates that the motion will be carried here, probably carried unanimously, but if we are to realise its aspirations it will entail unanimity of purpose on the part of the public and private sector unions in any post *Sustaining Progress* pay talks, because it will be necessary to approach it in that way to be very clear on our specific strategy and the measures we envisage because we are directly cutting across the public policy that is unfolding in the country. And it's worth noting that it was that kind of unanimity of purpose that characterised our approach to the *Sustaining Progress* talks which resulted in the passage of the 2004 Miscellaneous Provisions Act which, notwithstanding its inadequacies, has nonetheless, if you were judge by the degree of energy that has been invested in it, agitated the most anti-trade union employers in the State a great deal more than all of the energy we have expended in rhetoric on the subject at Conferences such as this over the last ten years. Delegates, I move the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Jack, seconder?

Mike Jennings, SIPTU

Thank you Chairman, Mike Jennings from SIPTU seconding motion No.60. Chairman, on Tuesday during the debate on migrant workers I referred to Mary Harney's role in bringing the Gama Construction Company here and speculated that it was part of an agenda to destroy trade union conditions of employment and I think if we consider that this same Tánaiste vetoed a significant increase in the Labour Inspectorate during the last *Sustaining Progress* review, I think it alerts us to the fact that the poor level of enforcement of labour legislation is not an accident, it's the result of an ideological decision by this Government that they do not want to have workers rights implemented and they're quite content to see viciously unfair competition by unscrupulous employers who are quite prepared to ignore all and every statute governing the rights of workers. The result it that we now have a total complement, not a total workforce but a total complement, of 21 inspectors for 1.9 million workers. It's an absolute joke, the reality is our laws

are not being enforced, it's time to end this hypocrisy, we have good laws on statute, it's time to implement them, we need a decent inspectorate. Thank you Chairman.

Jim Penders, TEEU

Congress Brothers/Sisters I would just like to say a few words in support of the motion. My name is Jim Penders with the TEEU and I am a migrant worker. I have suffered personally and I have friends and colleagues who have suffered personally at the hands of the unscrupulous employer. This company Jet Wash Ltd. in Carraig Allen, Co. Leitrim over the years have refused to recognise a union. They have consistently ignored Labour Court and Rights Commissioners recommendations and maintained an aggressive anti union stance. I have been sacked not once but twice by this employer.

The first time in 1999 for organising the workforce, I was taken back after a few weeks when I was pointed out. Due to the number of improvements that we have achieved since 1999 and in particular securing of minimum rates of pay for all employees at Jet Wash Ltd. resulting in significant increases of pay for the substantial number of Latvian and Lithuanian workers at Jet Wash Ltd. our employer has from 17th June of this year decided to close the factory and make all of us redundant. I believe this redundancy situation is false and was engineered by our employer to rid the company of employees in the TEEU. I urge you please put this forward, it is important, we need more inspectors. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers to Motion 60? Can I move Motion 60 and put Motion 60 to the floor. Those in favour please show, those against

David Bell, Communication Workers Union

Thank you Brendan, President, Conference, David Bell, Communication Workers Union to move Motion 61. Comrades the race to the bottom is set to reach marathon proportions with our colleagues in AMICUS predicting that 200,000 UK jobs could be lost to off shore outsourcing before the end of the decade. Other pundits are predicting that off shore outsourcing of call centre work is expected to grow by 25% over the next 5 years.

It is interesting if not chastening to note however that EBS consulting lists Ireland as one of the five countries that are emerging as off shoring leader. Northern Ireland is billed by EBS as one of the countries like Bangladesh, Ghana and

Korea as next in line for a saving off shoring work. We therefore have a vested interest in developing a global strategy aimed at protecting jobs in the UK and Ireland whilst ensuring that where work is off shore beyond these islands in agreement with the relevant unions that compliance with ILO core labour standards including the conventions on the right to organise and on collective bargaining throughout the companies supply chains attaches to that work in its global application.

In contrast some UK companies are opting to retain UK based call centres believing that potential gains in terms of lower wages were outweighed by poor customer service and inadequate levels of data protection. In line with the theme of this Conference quality work equal quality life, we should be urging our members in their role as customers as well as trade unionists to challenge Government and companies who off shore work beyond Europe on this issue of the quality of service and to demand European standards on data protection in a simple but perhaps effective strategy in the campaign to retain work within the confines of the island.

Comrades in an attempt at demonstrating to you how Ireland and Northern Ireland in particular is up with the pace in the race to the bottom. Let me take you on a local but perhaps a global journey where work leaves BT Northern Ireland from Riverside Tower just around the corner from Conference. In a value range of £21,000 per annum, union organised, tax paying in the main. Notionally travels to India through the ether to BT preferred BPO supplier HCL Technologies, non unionised, low wage but returns in part through the ether to arrive at HCL Technologies European hub at a converted warehouse on the Apollo Road just 2 miles south of the city. Complete with Government grant subsidy in a value range of £10,600 per annum. 50% less than the value when it first left Northern Ireland and attached to a threat from a personnel manager to derecognise the Union because we do not understand their business. Well we do, its exploitation of the worst kind attached to sweat shop conditions, predicated on a double whammy by Government and a drain on the tax payer. It is sustained by liberals to the Government who lament that it would be nice if we had a choice, well we do have a choice and its simple, where revenue is generated from within the confines of the island, work should be serviced within the island of origin. I would ask Conference to support it. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Have we got a seconder, lovely. Speakers to Motion 61, Labour Standards. Put the motion to the floor. Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions – passed. Move onto Motion 62 Labour Inspectorate in Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Tom Ryan, Dublin Council of Trade Unions

Tom Ryan, Dublin Council of Trade Unions and ill be quick because the seconder is going to make a longer speech than the proposer. Everyone can see the motion and it sort of speaks for itself. I think we have to look at instead of saying we want another 10 labour inspectorates we want another 110 because exploitation is widespread throughout industry, not only in construction but everywhere. The other point is this, whatever about worrying about labour inspectors if you have a dog you better be very worried because our Government has more dog inspectors than labour inspectors so watch out, they are coming after you for that but they won't come after you for exploitation. I move the motion, thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Secunder, Mike.

Mike Jennings, SIPTU

The reason that I am coming up again is that my colleague Eric Fleming from the Dublin Council of Trade Unions is attending a funeral and especially wanted to have some remarks made so I am seconding the motion. If I can just say on Eric's behalf and indeed on my own and other Unions behalf to express thanks and the many messages of support that we received for the efforts put in on behalf of the GAMA workers. I know that was deeply appreciated by Eric and by his colleagues.

Can I further say that I'm quite happy to pay generous tribute to Joe Higgins T.D. for the work that he did also but I have nothing but contempt for the people who tried to use the GAMA issue as an exercise in union bashing and to spread lies that my union and other unions had not done their work on behalf of the GAMA workers. Can I say that I fully expected to see such allegations coming from the ranks of right wing journalists and so on but I didn't expect and I was very disappointed to hear such allegations made from this rostrum at a Trade Union Forum and I just want to say if anybody wants to see the worksheets of the hours and hours and hours of work put in by officials of my union and other unions prior to the exposure of GAMA in order to bring about the exposure of GAMA, those records are available.

I will finish on this one point Chairman if I may, what we need is not only a radical improvement in the number of labour inspectors but the GAMA experience shows us that we need a quality improvement in the inspectorate, in other words the inspectorate must be equipped with auditors, solicitors, with legal advisors and so on in the same way that the Criminal Assets Bureau has these sort of

resources at their disposal to investigate serious abuses because in my opinion that's the same realm that we are in. These people are criminals and they need to be treated as such. Thank you Chairman.

Joe Moore, Communication Workers Union

President, Joe Moore, Communications Workers Union supporting the motion. The issue that I would like to concentrate on is the exploitation of young people in the work place. Young school going children between the ages of 15 and 18 are barred from working beyond 11.00 at night. Yet through most of the hotels and large bars around the country you will find young people working to 12.00, 1.00, 2.00, 3.00 O'clock in the morning. I know at least 1 school principle in the Cork area who approached the manager of a local hotel to try to have it stopped but all in vain. The reason this is happening is the lack of inspectors plus the restriction on the hours that the inspectors work because to prosecute employers exploiting young people their premises need to be visited after 11.00 at night. That's not happening, Conference would like you to support the motion, thanks.

Blair Horan, Civil, Public and Services Union

Delegates, Blair Horan, Civil, Public and Services Union supporting the motion. Delegates we have fought hard within the civil service campaigning for more labour inspectors to be appointed, that certainly has always been an issue of importance for us within the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment and currently there are more labour inspectors actually been appointed on foot of the campaign by Congress and supported by other Unions. I want to support the remarks that Mick Jennings said I think it's despicable for anyone from this rostrum to criticise SIPTU over their work on behalf of the GAMA workers and certainly CPSU will be no part of that, thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speaker to Motion 62 Labour Inspectorate, can I put Motion 62 to Congress. Please show those in favour, against, abstentions – passed unanimously.

Can I now move to Motion 63 Agency Workers on behalf of USDAW

Marcie Wilson, USDAW

Marcie Wilson representing USDAW moving Motion 63, Agency Workers. President, delegates agency workers are often employed on inferior terms and

conditions without sick pay, pensions or proper training. They are greater exposed to the health and safety risks. This Conference calls for tighter controls on employment agencies and improved terms and conditions and rights for agency workers.

Currently there is a lack of progress towards the European Union directive on temporary agency workers. This means thousands of agency workers do not enjoy the same employment rights as other workers. The agency workers are often employed quite deliberately on inferior terms and conditions. They rarely have access to sick pay/pensions, they receive little or no training and they are exposed to greater health and safety risks and have no protection on such things as maternity rights. Employers often use them to undermine existing established pay conditions and to drive a wedge of cheaper labour to the existing work forces.

The view that agency workers are stereotyped and often employed as either secretaries or admin workers, temping in offices is a myth. This single largest group of agency workers, around 30% work in main stream manufacturing industries, the fastest rising group among professional and managerial workers up 6 fold in the last 5 years, there is at least 70,000 agency workers in the UK including Northern Ireland and to have reinforced this argument it is a fact that Belfast City Council pays year on year over £1 million employing agency workers.

Comrades, lets nail this myth that agency workers are only there to cover pigs in troughs such as holidays and sickness absence. The vast majority are working for extended periods and have established presence on the pay roll. They are not just there to make up skeleton levels of permanent staffing. Conference calls for the EU Temporary Agency Workers Directive to be implemented at the earliest possible time and the introduction of a licensing system for all employment agencies and extended employment rights for all agency workers and protection for whistle blowers who report unscrupulous employment agencies and employers.

Conference, unity is strength, be united support the motion. I move.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Can we have a seconder for Motion 63, formally, speakers to Motion 63 on Agency Workers. Can I put Motion 63 to Conference, those in favour please show. Those against, abstentions. Unanimous. Can I move now to Motion 64. Freelance Workers on behalf of the NUJ.

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists

Seamus Dooley, National Union of Journalists, delegates this motion may appear on the face of which you refer to as a small group of workers because it uses the terms freelance and that is a term normally associated with journalists. But delegates, this motion is of a fundamental importance to the labour movement because there is a growing tendency within Europe and not just in Ireland to abuse competition law as a means of circumventing labour legislation.

SIPTU and the NUJ have been engaged in a long battle in protecting the rights of actors, of camera operators, of photographers, of writers to be represented by Trade Unions. The abuse of competition law to prevent that has led to our colleagues in SIPTU being threatened with having not just civil but criminal proceedings through the court. The role of the Competition Authority must be seriously challenged because the Competition Authority is acting as a statutory ideologue moving with all the speed of Cardinal Razingher in promoting an ideology and this is the ideology that competition is the answer to everything.

Do you seriously believe for one moment that if competition law is used to undermine the rights of workers that you are going to get cheaper papers from Tony O'Reilly, that if Jack O'Connor's members are not represented by Equity that in some way the price of tickets at The Point are going to fall, of course they are not. But the use of competition law to prevent the right of Unions to represent single workers is something which this Union must take seriously as part of our upcoming negotiations. Because it is capable of abuse in the construction industry, in the treatment of migrant workers, it is an issue of fundamental importance. We raised it many years ago and the advice then was correct at the time and that was keep your head down and say nothing because other employers may hear about it.

The reality is that what those barons in the provincial press did 5/6 years ago, others are doing now. This is not some sort of isolated incident. This is part of a movement to use competition law directed by our so called friends in Baggot Street, aided and abetted by public servants, unworthy of the name employed by the Competition Authority, led by a Director who is clearly committed to a ideology. I resent fully the fact that this stage is operating a system which uses competition law in order to prevent the rights of workers. Support vigorously this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Seamus. Secunder, Jack

Jack O'Connor, SIPTU

President, delegates, Jack O'Connor, SIPTU seconding the motion. Just to make the point as Seamus has said that legitimate as it is, this is not just about the rights of a group of workers on the margins in particular sectors of the economy. This is central to a thrust that is underway in our economy and indeed in the world. The use of competition, the concept of competition and competition law, to attack fundamental rights of workers. We haven't established throughout the world the right to engage in collective bargaining yet. We haven't even established it as a right in Europe yet. But we have established it as a legitimate aspiration in the minds of people generally. What is underway now in the unfolding of the neo liberal project is an attack on the very legitimacy of that concept as an aspiration. What is required in relation to this is the greatest degree of vigilance and sustained activity on the part of the Trade Union movement generally in order to ensure that we protect the very core concept in the right to engage in collective bargaining itself. We fully support the motion. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers to Motion 64, Freelance Workers? Can I put Motion 64 to the floor please? All in favour please show, against, abstentions. That is passed unanimously.

Can I move now to Motion 65, Two Tier Workforce on behalf of GMB

Pauline Buchanan, GMB

Chair, Conference, Pauline Buchanan GMB to move to for proposition 65. Colleagues the creation of the Two Tier Workforce and the employment practices that have been established because of it are an absolute disgrace. Thousands of workers that were and indeed are transferred from the public to the private section under public private partnership, private finance schemes, joint ventures and many other guises have seen their pay, their terms and conditions and their pension entitlements slashed. New employees post transfer do not even get the limited protection of existing staff. Their terms and conditions are often worse, creating the Two Tier Workforce where two people doing the same job are on different terms and conditions.

We heard yesterday the General Secretary in response to the Taoiseach talk about our immigrant population and about the difficulties our young people have on getting onto the housing ladder. These are but two of the social injustices resulting in poverty which are exasperated by this system. Colleagues, while the Governments announcement to end the Two Tier Workforce in the public

services is to be broadly welcomed, they have stipulated exceptions which are unacceptable to us and the practical detail is yet unclear.

Conference, we are tired of promises from Government to put in legislation with exceptions. We want to ensure that all workers are protected, whether they be in the public or private sector. We have heard from our colleagues this morning in the CWU and in USDAW on the particular abuses of agency workers and we need to bare that in mind.

We have also heard this week from John Monks, ETUC and it is clear that the best and the most recent employment protection has come through European legislation. It must be our objective to convert codes of practice and memorandums of understanding into concrete legislation which protects our members, North and South, East and West by effective implementation of strong legislation. I ask you to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Have we got a seconder for Motion 65, formally seconded. Have we got speakers to Motion 65, Two Tier Workforce? Ok can I put Motion 65 to Conference? Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions. It has passed unanimously.

Move to Motion 66, Privacy of Employees, the NUJ.

Mary Maher, National Union of Journalists

Mary Maher, National Union of Journalists. Sisters and brothers, we can at least be very grateful for the eternal novelty in the life of Trade Union activists, because the one thing bosses are very good at doing is coming up with fresh tricks. One of the latest is genetic testing brought to our attention by a member in Northern Ireland. Genetic testing is the Star Trek version of the standard medical that is often required of new employees. The medical is meant to assess whether or not you are fit to work. Genetic testing assesses whether you have such dodgy chromosomes that you might in future not be fit to work. This is legal, to my surprise and I'm sure to your surprise and so are a range of other less exotic but very common abuses, invasions of privacy that are simply outrageous in the workforce such as body searching, handbag searching. An area our colleagues in MANDATE know a great deal more about than most of us.

It is legal because all that is required is a consent form signed, if the job applicant signs the consent form it is legal and of course if you don't sign it you don't get the job. I don't have to mention it as these practices are most widespread in the

areas where the pay is lowest and conditions worse and we can do something about this. The motion is very straightforward, we need to amend the legislation and we are calling on Congress to work towards that end. Thank you very much.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Are you seconding the motion? Ok.

Karen Moran, MANDATE

President, delegates Karen Moran, MANDATE formally seconding Motion 66 in the name of the NUJ. Retail workers are increasingly being subjected to intrusive technology whether its video cameras hidden in registers, placed in canteens, hidden in air vents, employers are increasingly willing to invade our privacy and using this as a control mechanism. We must expose these tactics when we discover them and therefore we in MANDATE absolutely support Motion 66. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers on Motion 66? Can I put motion 66 to Conference? Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions. Its passed.

Can I move to Motion 67 – Part-time Workers in the ESBOA. It is very difficult to talk to Conference when I'm eating a sweet.

Siobhan Brown, ESB Officer's Association

Siobhan Brown, ESB Officer's Association moving Motion 67. From the individual workers perspective flexible working arrangements are desirable and in many cases essential if the employee is to remain in employment. Research has shown that lack of availability of flexible working has meant that workers, most often women have been forced to leave the workplace. The OECD in 2003 recommended that the Republic of Ireland introduce an entitlement to part- time work for parents of young children. In 2004 a public consultation fora on families and family life stated that a balance between employment and family life should be a principle underlying future family policy in Ireland.

Workers should have a right to request and be granted at least flexible working option. The right to work flexibly for parents already exists in a number of EU countries. For example, since 2003 in the UK as many of our colleagues here

know, parents have a right to apply to work flexibly and their employers have a duty to consider these requests seriously. Other EU countries with flexible working rights are the Netherlands, Germany and Greece. In Ireland the male model of work is still the norm, where hours and conditions are still in the traditional form. We are all aware that more and more women are returning to or staying in the workplace. However, the lack of availability of flexible working has meant that many workers including women have been forced to leave the work place.

A lot of good work has already been done to address work life balance issues. Many individual employers including ESB offer a variety of flexible working options. However, current Irish Government policy does not do enough to address gaps between men and women in the workplace. A key challenge is to organise policy in a manner that has equality in all forms as an end goal and an operating principle. Colleagues, I urge you to support this motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Have we got a seconder for Motion 67, formally. Any speakers to Motion 67? Can I put Motion 67 to Congress? Those in favour, those against, abstentions. Passed.

Can I move now to Motion 68, Agency Workers' Directive on behalf of Craigavon Trades Council.

Dooley Harte, Craigavon Trades Council

President, Conference Dooley Harte on behalf of Craigavon Trades Council to move Motion number 68. I'm fully supporting the previous comments made especially under Motion 63 moved by USDAW. The EU Temporary Agency Workers Directive was the third strand of a social partnership agreement with the European Union. Strand 1 was the Part-Time Workers Regulations and this was followed by Strand 2 which was the Fixed Contracts Workers Regulations. The third Strand dealing with Temporary Agency Workers proved to be more difficult and the negotiations broke down in May, 2001. The European Commission then published proposals for the directive for temporary agency workers in March, 2002 and carried out a public consultation between July and October, 2002. The Commission then published revised proposals in December, 2002 and as far as the British and Irish Governments are concerned nothing more has happened.

Conference the aim of this Directive was to improve the quality of temporary agency workers by requiring that they be treated no less favourably than comparable employees in the user company. In 2003 it was estimated that about 600,000 people were working as temporary agency workers at any one time.

The Directive aims to protect these workers in a number of ways. First, that the principle of non discrimination was applied to temporary agency workers pay, working conditions, long hours, health and safety would all improve. It is estimated in the British Governments own paper that non discrimination in pay would benefit agency workers by £366 million per year. Agency workers would also benefit from increased holiday pay and annual leave by £118 million per year and the exchequer in the UK would receive £92 million a year extra in taxes on these increases.

But Conference the improvements would not only be financial, the long hours culture that can typify temporary agency work would be eradicated, health and safety and training would be improved and thus the wellbeing of agency workers. Conference, giving the increased reliance of migrant labour on agencies protection could be provided for all sections of our communities. Conference, we all hear the examples, temporary agency workers who are employed on a daily and sometimes hourly basis held hostage to the whims of the employers, these workers need our support as much as any other.

Our motion calls for the ratification of the Directive by both the British and Irish Governments because to their shame they are 2 of 4 EU nations holding back this protection. We would urge Conference to support the motion on calling the Executive Committee to work to protect all workers through this Directive. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you Dooley.

Mel Corey, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union

President, Congress Mel Corey, Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union seconding the motion. Colleagues, its nothing short of shameful that the British and Irish Governments are attempting to block new rights for agency workers. On Tuesday this Conference had a comprehensive debate on the issue of migrant workers and the challenges affecting those workers. A number of speakers referred to the agencies who profit from the exploitation of these workers. The only reason for the existence of these agencies is to profit from denying their employees the same rights and benefits enjoyed by full time permanent unionised workers. If this Directive is radiated, it will go a long way to eradicating these cowboy agencies and give us a valuable tool for organisation

recruitment. For our part delegates the path is very clear, let us get out there and organise agency workers because whether they are permanent, full time, temporary, agency or migrant, they are all workers and they are crying out for our help. Please support the motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers?

Dwyer McKick, Craigavon Trades Council

President, Congress fellow delegates Dwyer McKick, Craigavon Trades Council in support of Motion number 68. The arguments levelled by Government Ministers and business lobbies alike against this Directive is neither substantive or quantifiable. The implementation of Directives is of paramount importance because without it agencies will continue to work as no more or less as legalised gang masters. The Right Honourable Secretary for State Northern Ireland, Peter Hain was a fervent supporter against the scourge of apartheid, yet it is reprehensible that him and his Government have yet to implement a Directive which will once and for all eradicate the social apartheid that comes with the agencies.

This social apartheid has been created and has been aided by unscrupulous agencies and employers alike. I urge you to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Any more speakers for Motion 68? Can I put Motion 68 to Conference? Those in favour please show, against, abstentions. It's passed.

Can I move now to Motion 69 which is the Black/Shadow Economy by FUGE

Jim Faye, FUGE

Jim Faye, FUGE moving Motion 69 on the Shadow/Black Economy. President, fellow delegates, this motion by FUGE is calling on the National Executive of Congress to demand of Government that they devise and implement a new and more stringent policy against those who are involved in the shadow economy. We acknowledge that some progress has been made in certain areas of the shadow economy, particularly in the areas highlighted by the Flood Tribunal. However evidence shows that the shadow economy is alive and active in other areas of the economy. So it is our view that further action by Government is

needed to curb this plague on law abiding tax payer. Many of these law abiding tax payer, Chair are our members who are paying PAYE/PRSI/VAT/excise duties/local charges etc, etc, etc.

Studies of the shadow economy by a number of eminent economists and I quote Gabriel Fagan and Professor Schneider as two of them have produced a series of varying results and the most reliable figures would suggest that Ireland has an active shadow economy of up to 10% of gross national product. For the record the 2003 figure which is the latest figure that is available in the Republic of GNP is €111.7 billion. The projected figure for 2004 which I understand will be released in August is €118 billion. Taking a GNP of 7.5% which is half way between 5% and 10% and a calculation based on this. The shadow economy could be as high as €9 billion. There are other reports out there who suggest however that it could be as high as €13 billion. Taking the figure of €9 billion and an average tax paying of 25% this means that the exchequer is losing up to €2.25 billion. Whatever the final figure Chair reached we can say with certainty that this activity must be seriously curtailed as it is causing 1. a loss in revenue to the National Exchequer, 2. Our legitimate tax payers are paying higher than required taxes, 3. Many businesses who are trading legitimately are suffering because this activity is there, 4. Jobs are lost as businesses and services are forced to close down and the Trade Union movement suffers from losses in membership.

The shadow economy activity is not confined to the Republic of Ireland, indeed there is evidence to suggest that in Northern Ireland this activity is just as profitable for those involved in it, so the same official action is required here in order to curb tax evasion and tax avoidance. It is our view that the Government in the relevant jurisdictions should engage with employers and ICTU in order to identify the areas in the economy that are at risk from this illegal activity. A joint approach must be agreed by all parties if this most serious issue is to be tackled. Reports by business representatives suggest that certain areas of the economy could be tackled. They are building and construction, private security, cleaning and associated services. Other reports on the waste disposal and cash business suggests that the shadow economy is doing well and indeed maybe if we go to the Curragh on Sunday, Chair, to the races we might see some of our part-time people there, our non resistance with special status who should be paying the tax as well.

The smuggling of illegal drugs and substances and other goods into the country is still a large feature of the tax avoidance scams that are operated by criminal gangs and others. The fact that millions of euro in illegal fireworks, this is just an example, are smuggled into the Republic each year, into Ireland would suggest that this is only the tip of the iceberg. If we are to make further progress on this, in tackling the shadow economy a new policy of prevention and detection of those engaged in this activity is needed. This motion is calling on the National

Executive Committee of the ICTU to demand government to implement such a policy. I ask your support for this motion. Thanks delegates, I move.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you, have we a seconder for Motion 69? Secunder, formally. Any speakers to Motion 69? Can I put Motion 69 to the floor please? Those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, that's passed.

Can I call on Eamon Devoy, Skills Training, TEEU. You're looking bad this morning Eamon. I think that you have won the prize.

Eamon Devoy, TEEU

Bear with me, that's all I can say. President, delegates, Eamon Devoy, TEEU moving Motion 70. 'Ahead of the Curve, Ireland's Place in the Global Economy' is the first private sector enterprise strategy for Ireland in the last 12 years. It makes a series of key recommendations designed to ensure competitive advantage and to build on the conditions essential for sustainable enterprise in Ireland to the year 2015. Our good friend and colleague, Des Geraghty represented the Trade Union movement on this group and the report should be welcomed by Congress as recommendations are progressive and far reaching. One of the key recommendations is that every worker should be afforded the opportunity to train and retrain and in that way afford them the opportunity to move one step up the national framework of qualifications. This strategy has become known as the 'One Step Up' initiative.

If all of the potential identified in this report is to be achieved, there are 2 essential ingredients, the first is that the necessary financial resources are focused appropriately on people in vulnerable employments and secondly the introduction of paid leave in order that training is achieved. On the first point in the financial resources, the Government when announcing the strategy last year committed €20 million per annum for the next 5 years. However, in this year alone in understand that €44 million has already been made available. A key component of this strategy is to invest in this 'One Step Up' initiative to encourage potential in ongoing learning. It is essential therefore, that the resources are accessible and focused at the level of the enterprise.

To date one very successful dissemination stream from the training front has been through Skillnets. Skillnets is a national body, managed by the Social Partners who can readily identify particular needs at enterprise level. It's clear that this strategy of supporting industry through enterprise led networks is a positive success and should therefore be supported into the future.

On the second point of paid leave, our course the employers want all their employees to train but through lean management methods in place it make this very difficult to establish paid release in those circumstances. We must put the right to train squarely on the top of the agenda for employers. It is in the collective interest of all parties that paid release is secured as a right. I will leave you with this thought. Jim Conway, the Training Manager of Disney Corporation was speaking at a Conference in Dublin recently when he encouraged employers to train, train and re-train their employees. One gombeen manager asked him, "well what if we invest in training and the employees leave?" Jim Conway replied, "consider the alternative, imagine if you didn't and they stayed".

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Shows you there's life there yet. Can I have a seconder for Motion 70, formally. Any speakers to Motion 70? Can I put Motion 70 to Congress? Those in favour please show, those against please show, abstentions. Passed.

Can I move to Motion 71, Skills Training by NATFHE.

Monica Goligher, NATFHE

Monica Goligher moving Motion 71 on behalf of NATFHE. Our association has been campaigning for years for a system to make it easier to compare the level and value of education and training qualifications on either side of the border. The North and South have very different systems. The Annual Report on page 104 has an advertisement for Skills Training Certification in the Republic, it is supported by Congress. On page 108 another advertisement for the National Framework of Qualifications, on page 110 another ad for the Higher Education & Training Awards Council. The Republics system has 10 different levels of qualification and a plethora of awards for further and higher education, a raft of vocational qualifications and a variety of examining bodies such as City & Guilds, Ed excel and OCR.

The North has bodies which do a similar job, The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority, The Council for Curriculum & Examinations Assessments, we share also many of the awarding bodies. But we have 5 different levels of qualifications, these involve NVQ's, GCSE, GCE, AVCE, HNC, HND, Foundation Degrees and Degrees. The problem is that apart from the fact that within each jurisdiction it is difficult to make sense of the qualification systems, it is doubly difficult for someone crossing the border to seek work in the other jurisdiction. Workers are disadvantaged, employers in the North don't understand the Southern qualification and vice versa.

But the reality of our economies is that people do cross the border daily to seek work or to undergo training and they are disadvantaged if perspective employers don't understand the level and value of their qualifications. Employers are also disadvantaged if they misunderstand someone's qualification. We need a simple ready reckoner that facilitates the comparison of the qualifications. We are looking for a system of equivalences that everyone can understand. We will continue to press our government on this issue and we will work with our friends in other unions such as the TUI for similar action in the South. But it is an issue that goes way beyond the Teacher Unions alone and that is why we feel that it is something Congress must also take up. I ask you to support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague. Have we a seconder for Motion 71? Formally, thank you. Any speakers on Motion 71? Can I put Motion 71 to the floor, those in favour please show, those against, abstentions, that's passed unanimously.

Can I move to Motion 72, which is a prize we were all looking for. The last motion.

John O'Neill, RMT

Good morning colleagues and delegates, John O'Neill, RMT, this is my first time speaking at Conference. I'm not sure whether he meant that was the prize you were getting or what. SIPTU is currently in dispute with Irish Ferries over the company's decision to remove the ship from the Irish flag and remove Irish Sea farers with low cost agency crews. The ship is currently employing sea farers on rates of €3.50 an hour, working 84 hours a week for a continuous period of 3-4 months with no weekend breaks or leaves. Alfie McGrath on behalf of the Irish Ferries in the Sunday Tribune, May 29th, 2005 stated if you hire a Pole then you pay Polish rates of pay. We understand that is in the process of balloting sea freer members for industrial action unless management withdraws its intentions to outsource on the Irish Sea.

SIPTU's fight against exploitive conditions goes hand in hand with our MP's campaign for justice at sea. The United Kingdom is an island nation heavily dependent upon ships for our trade, but numbers of sea farers have declined dramatically in the last few years. UK sea farer ratings, numbers have fallen from 30,000 in 1980 to less than 10,000 today. Confounded this year by the loss of 1,200 jobs in P & O.

The Government must totally scrap Section 9 of the Race Relations Act. This disgraceful legislation allows sea farers in UK work forces to the different rates of pay on the basis of their nationality. Ship owners can continue to replace UK sea farers with foreign national sea farers, recruit abroad on exploitive rates of pay. Sea farers are the only groups of workers in the UK to suffer from this discrimination. If exemption from the Race Relations Act was not bad enough, we have now been advised that the National Minimum Wages does not apply to UK sea farers on board UK ships whilst in UK waters. The legislation only applies when the ship is in port or UK internal waters.

The following RMT emergency motion was passed at the Wales TUC in May, Conference is deeply concerned at this statement in a letter to RMT by the previous UK shipping manager on 23rd March, 2005, that the minimum wage only applies to UK internal waters, this means that ships operating in UK territorial waters are under no obligation to pay the minimum rate despite the fact that other legislation applies in UK territorial waters.

Conference always notes the absence of basic minimum employment protections has led to appalling exploitation of non domicile sea farers working in UK and Irish waters. Conference applauds the efforts of the Irish Trade Union, SIPTU and ITF in seeking to tackling this exploitation and to seek minimum terms and conditions. Conference believes there has been ample time to address these issues and it's now time end this exploitation. Conference, we request the General Council urgently to lobby the Wales Assembly Government to work with the Irish Government to end the exploitation of sea farers in the Irish sea, lobby the UK Government to ensure that full provisions of the Race Relations Act and minimum wage applies to all sea farers working in UK territorial waters.

Finally, lobby the UK Government to use its Presidency of the European Council of Ministers to press for directive on manning conditions for regular passenger and ferry services operation between member states. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you colleague. That wasn't too bad sure it wasn't? You get the benefit of moving the last motion, look at the length of time you got. Can we have a seconder please?

Colm Kinsella, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union

President, comrades, Colm Kinsella, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union seconding the motion. I have been a seaman for over 30 years, in that time I have seen the demise of 2 great companies I have worked with B & I and Irish Shipping. We now have Arklow Shipping, the biggest shipping

company in the Republic of Ireland with a fleet of over 30 modern ships, but they still outsource their crews and are a non contract and non union company whose work force is made up of less than 5% of the Irish sea farers.

Irish Ferries still outsource some of their crews. We do not yet have a victory but in congratulation SIPTU we must also congratulate the French seamen who blockaded the French ports and highlighted the plight of the Irish seaman whose jobs were in jeopardy. I have to ask myself why we did not reciprocate that action in Ireland. We must not take our eye off the ball, the battle is far from over. We have seen what happened to the Dublin and Liverpool dockers and we must not allow that to happen to Irish and British seamen. Please support the sea farers. Please support this motion.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Thank you. Any other speakers?

Joe O'Flynn, SIPTU

President, colleagues, Joe O'Flynn, SIPTU. Could I first of all thank the RMT and the Amalgamated and indeed the other affiliates who have worked in solidarity with us in relation to the campaign on behalf of the sea farers and ferry workers. Earlier this morning colleagues we rightfully passed the motions in relation to the Services Directive. Because of the implications of country of origin on established pay and conditions, what we have presently operating in Ireland and the UK and indeed across Europe are flags of convenience ships which means that even minimum pay legislation isn't adhered to.

I think its imperative that we protect the established pay and conditions on behalf of sea farers, by seeking the introduction of a European ferries directive as a matter of urgency, thereby protecting the established pay and conditions not just of the migrant workers but indeed our own workers who have been working in this industry for many a long year. I think it is important colleagues that we also recognise that this fight isn't just in relation to the union organised ferry operators but there are ferry operators working in this jurisdiction who are non union who refuse to recognise the right of their workers to be represented by a professional Trade Union organisation. They are equally as guilty, if not more so in undermining the established pay and conditions and that is why there is a greater need than ever before to organise the unorganised because we have to make sure that the competition that we are dealing with is fair and that there is equity in relation to the conduct of business and indeed the regulation of employment standards within the jurisdiction. I urge Conference it whole heartedly support this motion. Thank you.

Brendan Mackin, Congress President

Anymore speakers to Motion 72 (Maritime Industry). Can I put the Motion to Congress, those in favour please show. Those against, abstentions, it was passed unanimously. This brings us to the end of the Motions. Can I put to Congress Chapters 1, 2 & 3 Section 3 of the Executive Committee Report, and Chapter 7, part 1, part 2 and Chapter 8. Can I ask Congress to adopt Section 4 of the Report. It that agreed? Can I ask Conference to adopt the Executive Committee Report in full? Thank you Conference. Can I call on the General Secretary to say a few kind words.

David Begg, General Secretary

Thanks very much President. Colleagues, just as we come to the end of Conference there is just a few people that I want to thank. Starting off first of all with the First Citizen of Belfast, the Lord Mayor Councillor Wallace Browne for all the good will and courtesy and so on the he and his colleagues have shown to us during the week and amongst his colleagues particularly I include the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council Mr. Peter McNeary, the staff of the City Council generally and of the City Hall and particularly may I say the staff here at the Waterfront Centre who have been excellent to us during the week. A clear demonstration I think if one were needed to everybody just how well public enterprises can work, with great credit to the City Council.

Can I thank also the International Fund for Ireland who helped us with the financing of this Conference and indeed our advertisers, exhibitors and sponsors. Can I thank also the members of the media, members themselves of course of the NUJ who were here during the week covering our proceedings and generally we have a sort of a love/hate relationship with but I think we need one another so we have to try and get on as best we can. I think in general they do an excellent job and I would very much like to thank them for that.

Can I say also colleagues that I think we have had quiet a good Conference. If you think about it looking back we have had two Cabinet Ministers from Britain, we have had the Lord Mayor, we have had the Taoiseach, we have had a range of I think by common consent what were excellent international speakers here which gave a sort of a great flavour to our Conference and a broader perspective to it. Just to say to you that these things don't happen by accident, in a way when you see a Conference organised and everything goes smoothly you think well sure it just all fell into place. But that is not the way it is, and I just mentioned that because I want to pay a particular tribute to my own colleagues on the Congress Secretariat who both in the Northern Ireland office and from Dublin have worked as a combined united team, not just over the period of the week but indeed in the months leading up to the Conference to make those preparations and to ensure that everything went smoothly for you, that you could have a good and effective Conference.

Their problems were made more acute in fact by the fact that toward the end of last week our colleague Sally Anne Kinahan had a major family illness to contend with and effectively was taken out of the game and everybody in the Congress Secretariat more or less had to fill in the gaps there and take on the additional work because Sally Anne has been very much involved in the preparation for this Congress and indeed in sections of the report that were coming to it. So at the very last minute everybody took on that huge additional amount of work and I want to thank them particularly for it. It was great team work, I quite genuinely can't adequately express how grateful I am for everything that they have done.

I would like to say in particular, if they don't mind me saying this that the Project Manager for this Conference was Eileen Sweeney and she really is such a valuable asset to Congress and I thank her particularly for everything that she has done. Lastly, if I can thank the Executive Council members and Officers of Congress for all the work in the last 2 years in putting together the work which is represented in the Annual Report. And finally, Mr. President a work of thanks to yourself, it has been a great pleasure to work with you, indeed its been a privilege to work with you. We have seen this week as you have guided this Conference, the very high standing which you have in this City of Belfast. You have been a great leader of the Trade Union movement and you are indeed a great trade unionist and I thank you very much.

Peter McLoone, Congress President

Ok Delegates we are now moving to the closing ceremony, so I am going to invite Shay Cody to propose a vote of thanks to the outgoing President and Patricia McKeown to second Shay.

Shay Cody, Executive Council

Delegates, Shay Cody Executive Council. It gives me great pleasure to have the honour of proposing a vote of thanks to our outgoing President, Brendan Mackin. Brendan has certainly marked this Conference in a unique way through his own personality. Brendan's keynote presidential address was wide ranging and practical, his suggestions of us in the South using the success of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as a model to be replicated will now find space in the centre of our engagement with Government. His championing of the North/South bodies and a Trade Union role on them is now on the agenda at the highest level. Those who heard Brendan's remarks in City Hall, all of us who observed and admired his running of Conference will have noted his own personal imprint on our proceedings and in particular how his personality imprinted on our business here in Belfast.

Brendan has a great pride in his city and its people. His easy manner and engagement with all sections of the community is obvious to us all. From a Southern perspective, Brendan has opened our eyes to the possibilities and potential that is within reach to all in the North. A warm welcome by a Democratic Unionist Party Lord Mayor and Trevor Ringland's inspiring contribution both conveyed Brendan's particular touch. The performance on Wednesday lunchtime by 'ADream' conveyed especially to us in the South that particular Northern love of drumming. Delegates, we have had a long and successful week and we return to our individual unions with a serious and constructive agenda. In the City Hall, Alan Johnson quoted from an American politician who said that political parties campaign in poetry and govern in prose. This Conference and the agenda of work we have given ourselves represent Brendan's poetry. Brendan, Thank You.

Patricia McKeown, Executive Council

President, Delegates, Patricia McKeown, Executive Council. When I was asked to second the vote of thanks to our President, I thought what fun I can have here. So I send our internal intelligence services out and they started by trawling the net, that wasn't too fruitful, that was very respectable and recounted your work in BURC, your role in the Housing Executive, your role on the European bodies and a very comprehensive report on excellent work you have done in making links as President of ICTU with the resilient Trade Union movement which you speak, seeking support and solidarity. All by the way, Dave I see FTU affiliates so that being respectable I had to go to other sources and trawl them, now that was very fruitful. Are you a bit like the bridegroom who is nervously wondering what's coming next in the speech.

Shall we start with the Presidents nickname, I know it and indeed some of you do but I'm not going to disclose it. But even more interesting is the story about how he got it, but I'm not going to disclose that either. Instead President what I do want to do is highlight two key areas of achievement on your watch as President of ICTU over the last couple of years. The first is the work you have done in restoring the North/South Group of ICTU and supporting a range of very important North/ South and East/ West initiatives in Congress and in partnership with others which I think are going to become even more essential to the work of our movement in the coming years and thank you for that.

I also want to commend you for using your role as President of Congress to include a group that exists on the margins of this society, whose role in the peace process has been largely ignored and it is a role I think that we ignore at our peril. I speak of ex prisoners. I want to commend you President for including them, for supporting them, bringing them in out of the cold and I have to say it also takes tremendous guts as the President of ICTU to say I'm one of you.

I want to thank you for bringing our Conference to Belfast and for the showcasing the potential of our people. I hope it will return and return on a much more regular basis than it has done in the past and I want to echo everything that Shay has said about the contribution you have made and the fact that it has been a wonderful opportunity for those of us in the North to welcome our brothers and sisters from the South and say, "you can have a good time when you come here". But again to echo Shay, it's a tremendous work load now confronting us, set down by the affiliates, you President still are part of seeing that work through in the coming years and the rest of us on the Executive and I know our incoming President pledges to work as hard as we can to implement the decisions of ICTU over the last week. Thank you Brendan.

Brendan Mackin, Congress Outgoing President

You forgot to mention that the outgoing President has the right of reply!! Well Congress, I think being President of the ICTU in some respects reflects the values of the organisation of the Trade Union movement. I think of have the distinction of being the first lay member to be the President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It says something about our organisation that someone who is a lay member can come up through and work with all the levels and up to the highest levels.

It certainly has been an experience, being a lay member you are working in different areas of activity, you are working with community, you are working with ex prisoners, you are working with the anti-sectarian campaigns and you are seeking to build links on an international basis but more importantly, part of the role, that I think the Trade Union movement is increasingly successful at is that we are trying to build links between the people here in Northern Ireland and also building links between the North and the South. That's been done and I pay tremendous respect to those shop stewards who are working in there at the coalface and it's one of the reasons why the workplace in Northern Ireland has remained largely neutral and I would like to pay tribute to them.

The other thing about being President is that you see how the Union works at different levels, you get an overview. You see the whole interaction between Unions which sometimes is really great to see and sometimes not a very edifying spectacle. You see the internal politics and the external politics but more especially you see the Union movement, you see the need for the Union movement as the biggest civic society. Where we interact and how we interact but more importantly we interact in more places than we know because we have 750,000 who their families and the rest are moving right across this whole sphere of society. If we are able to grab that dynamic and move that dynamic we will succeed delivering what Patricia had said has been laid down for us to deliver. It

is not for us as a small group to do it, we permeate all of society, we represent society and as far as we are concerned we will make a society better. We are in a changing world, in a world of global dynamics, we are in a world that has great wealth yet at the same time there is no re-distribution of that wealth. We see it daily if we look at the media, we look at Africa we see kids dying every minute and the rest. And when we look inward and look cross border, there is also a role out there because at the end of the day a lot of us didn't come in here to change ourselves, a lot of us get engaged in the Trade Union movement to better our communities, better our workforces, better our people but a lot as well when you start moving it.

We wanted to change the world and I think when you lose the idea that we want to change the world for a better world we will lose ourselves. We should keep at the forefront. The thing about coming to Conference is that you see a lot of old faces, and it's always nice to see and it's true every two years you see older faces. But the question is in front of us and the big question is and I said it in my speech, we should keep it top of our agenda that is about organising. There are plenty of people out there who need to be organised and want to be organised and I think we should go out there to organise. Because when I talk about organising, we will know we are succeeding when we see the new faces coming through here and I think it is important to say hello old faces but welcome the new faces. Organisation must remain top of our agenda. In conclusion, I would like to thank the staff of Congress, the Belfast office and the staff in the Dublin office. I would also like to thank the Executive, for their support because in many respects I got plenty of advice on how to do things. Some of it not very good by the way! But more especially, I would like to thank Congress here this week because at the end of the day we can slate ourselves off but believe you me we have a lot to be proud of and we should go back out there and tell everybody. Thank you

Can I hand over the baton, I don't mind handing it over but he is a Manchester United supporter. I don't know whether to talk to him in an American accent as the Club has been taken over. Before I introduce the new President, just to acknowledge that Peter's brother Michael McLoone who is the Donegal County manager, not talking about the football team, I think it's the Local Authority is here and I'd like to welcome him here as well. So I will now hand you over to the new President of Congress, Mr. Peter McLoone.

Peter McLoone, Congress President

I can't imagine what my father would think if he was alive today, the irony of becoming the President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in the year that Liverpool stole the European Cup and in a year that your brother turned up to make sure the next Biennial Conference would be held in Donegal. My two daughters and son had planned to come up here this evening but it clashes with

the U2 concert and when I was with Michael in Clones last weekend, he said 'I think I'm going to the U2 concert' with his own daughter Caroline and clearly that's a battle that he lost as they sent him here to represent the family.

It is a great honour and privilege to be elected as President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and before closing the Conference I just want to share a few reflections with you. First of all thanks so many of you for turning out this morning, I often think on the last morning of the ICTU Conference that those that vote for the continuation of the half day on Wednesday are those that leave on the Friday morning but maybe that's for another day. I want at the outset to add my voice to the tributes that have already been paid to you Brendan, Brendan Mackin had an outstanding presidency and your excellent chairing of this Conference was I believe the major contributing factor to its success. Brendan isn't leaving us, he is staying on the Executive Council and we wish him continued success in the future. We will value his contribution, particularly in the work that we are doing in building North/South initiatives.

I want also to extend my warmest congratulations to Patricia McKeown and to Rosheen Callender who have been elected Vice Presidents and to Joe O'Flynn who has been re-elected as treasurer. Congratulations also to the other members of the new and extended Executive Council, I look forward to us working together over the next 2 years.

In a nutshell, the job of the Executive Council guided to some extent by the GPC is to ensure that Congress can take in its stride the major economic, social, political and other upheavals which will with certainty surface over the next 2 years and turn them to advantage. To do that successfully, we have to anticipate what is coming down the tracks, know what we want to achieve, have a plan to deal with it and have a capability to communicate our message consistently not just to union members but also to the wider audience who need to be continually reassured that there is a strong, vibrant and confident trade union movement in this society and one that is essential to campaign and protect the interests of civil society and not just the interests of people who are in membership of unions.

As I see it the strategic plan that was adopted by the outgoing Executive for 2005/2008 and the policies that were adopted at this Conference. They are not an end they are just the start of the work programme. To meet and deal successfully with the challenges we will need more than ideas, slogans or even statements of values. There is a very interesting extract in Chapter 6 of the Report of the Executive Council to this Conference which says if the Trade Union movement fails to define itself, it clearly communicates our plans, policies and aspirations, then we risk being defined by our opponents. We have already received a range of policy briefings on pensions, taxation, caring for the future, lifelong learning and there are more policies to come in the Autumn particularly the policy document that we are developing on the health services.

These briefings are designed not just to inform the members of the Executive Council but the entirety of Congress of the approach and the options that we can take towards negotiations on another social partnership agreement. Very soon we will deal with the question of what follows *Sustaining Progress*. There is no doubt in my mind that in the first 6 months of this presidency, it will come to dominate our agenda. It will represent our biggest challenge and it will as always consume our thoughts, our energies our time as we try to grapple collectively with the issues that confront us.

It is not appropriate at this stage that I anticipate how we will deal with the question. What I hope as an Executive Council we can engage with the agenda, effectively, creatively and most of all harmoniously because the glue that holds this Congress, this Trade Union movement together is our ability to work together, our ability to act collectively not individually on behalf of the interests of the people that we represent. In September/October of this year we will have to decide and agree on our priorities.

As David said in his response to the Taoiseach yesterday, a different approach will be needed and we will have a difficult task in defining those priorities. Whatever happens in the context of a successor to *Sustaining Progress*, I want to assure the workers in An Post that we will try and address the problems that were raised this week in the coming weeks in our engagement with Government so that we get that items off the agenda before we sit down to negotiate a successor to *Sustaining Progress*.

As you will have gathered from my contribution earlier this week I also want the Executive Council and all affiliates to instil a sense of urgency on recruitment and organising. The role of the Executive Council will be to identify and develop opportunities to recruit, to develop the operational plan that we need and the linkages that we must establish between recruitment, organisation, training or activists and communication to members. We also have to produce the resources because that is the single biggest challenge that we face if we are going to effectively take on the recruitment and challenge issue.

I said during the debate in private session, we do not have the resources within Congress currently to deal with this and we will have to engage in discussions with Unions over the coming months to decide how best to resource that campaign. The General Secretary and I have discussed this and agreed that we would be prepared to go and meet and talk to Executives of individual unions about this problem and how we would tackle it.

I think we need to reflect on one point, which is that there are many of us who have dispute funds that we are piling money into for a rainy day and it will be difficult to understand that in 20 years time if the floods are coming so if we have the capacity ourselves to resource this campaign over the next 4 or 5 years lets engage with it and lets as I said earlier on it the week that we are facing fierce

competition and its our responsibility, the responsibility of this generation to take on the recruitment campaign and deal with it from a position of strength.

Colleagues, I have great confidence in the future of the Trade Union movement on this island, listening to the General Secretary's intelligent, thoughtful, insightful, powerful response to the Taoiseach's address was not just a major morale boost for the delegates for this Conference but also to the entire Trade Union movement. We have very, very strong leadership available to us but we need to use it wisely and we need to use it to good effect and I really congratulate David for the leadership that he is providing to this movement. In fact as has already been acknowledged by both Brendan and David there is a tremendous team working for Congress and they do deliver a very high quality service and as you have seen from the reports that were distributed this week and that I have referred to earlier they deal with many complex issues. These are staff that give enormously of their time and I suppose often we don't give you the recognition that you deserve. This presidency and the members of the Executive Council look forward to working with you the staff in Congress, learning from your experience, respecting your contribution and most of all enjoying with you the opportunities the next two years will present.

Finally, delegates I just want to share with you a conversation that I had with Jack O'Connor when we were coming back from the Waterfront on Tuesday night after a fringe meeting, when he posed the question to me "Peter, are you looking forward to your Presidency?" And I thought for a minute and I said Jack is obviously trying to boost my confidence and inspire me with his well developed sense of optimism. Then when I heard Trevor Ringland speaking on Wednesday, I concluded that what Jack was actually saying to me, Peter over the next two years we will be so busy that there is no time for pessimism. I look forward to engaging with the business on that note. My pledge, delegates, in conclusion is that I will work tirelessly to repay the trust and confidence that you have reposed in me and it's now my task to formally close Conference and wish you all a safe journey home. See you in Donegal in two years.

Standing Orders Committee Report Number One Tuesday 21 June 2005 – Morning Session

Times of Sessions

1. Conference sessions will commence at 09.30 hours each day from Tuesday 21st June to Friday 24th June. 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 22nd June and Friday 24th June.

Ballot Papers

2. 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 Officers, Executive Council Members and Standing Orders Committee will be issued from 9.30 hours to 12.30 hours on Thursday 23rd June 2005.
 - 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 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 23rd June 2005.

Procedure to be used to elect Executive Council

3. The Executive Council election will be conducted using the single transferable vote system. The Congress Constitution provides that the election of the Executive Council must result in the election of at least eight women. In the event that the outcome of the election of the 30 Executive Council members conducted under single transferable vote system results in less than eight women being elected to the Executive Council 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.

Motions and Amendments

4. The Standing Orders Committee has examined the motions on the preliminary agenda and the amendments submitted by affiliated organisations.
5. The Standing Orders Committee wishes to draw the attention of affiliated organisations to the fact that a number of motions have been submitted that it could be argued are more appropriate to the Northern Ireland Conference of Congress. The Standing Orders Committee have on this occasion agreed to allow these motions on to the agenda of Conference. However in order to preserve the integrity of the Northern Ireland Conference motions submitted to any future Biennial Delegate Conference of Congress whose content is more appropriately related to matters in Northern Ireland will be ruled out of order.
6. The Standing Orders Committee rules that Motion No.50 on National Pay Agreements submitted by the TUI and motion No. 51 on Inability to Pay in State Enterprises submitted by the CWU are 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.
7. The Standing Orders Committee rules that Motion No.11 on Executive Council submitted by the IBOA is out of order on the basis that there is no provision in the Congress Constitution that allows for the appointment of permanent observers to the Congress Executive Council.
8. The Standing Orders Committee rules that Motion No. 12 on Election to the Executive Council submitted by the Galway Trades Council is out of order as the facility exists in the Congress Constitution that allows any affiliated organisation to propose a motion to amend the Congress Constitution and it is proper that if an affiliated organisation wishes to propose a motion seeking to change the Congress Constitution they should avail of this facility, by proposing a motion specifying the change they wish to see made and the precise amendments required to achieve this change.
9. The Standing Orders Committee rules that the amendment submitted by NIPSA to Motion No. 79 Rights of the Palestinian People is out of order as the objectives of the amendment are contrary to the objects of Congress as set out in paragraph 6 of the Congress Constitution and in particular paragraph 6(g) which reads as follows, "to promote fraternal and co-operative relations with trade union federations and congresses in other countries for the purpose of furthering the common interests of workers in all countries; and further co-operate with other types of democratic organisations in supporting progressive endeavours intended to safeguard and strengthen justice, peace and freedom throughout the world".
10. The Standing Orders Committee rules that all the remaining Motions and Amendments on the Final Agenda are in order.

Suspension of Standing Orders

11. 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

12. The 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

13. Fraternal addresses will be given by the following:

Ms. Francis O Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress. Francis will address Conference on the 21st June 2005 during the morning session of Conference.

Mr. Jimmy Hoffa, President of International Brotherhood of Teamsters and member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council. Jimmy will address Conference on Tuesday 21st June 2005 during the afternoon session of Conference.

Mr. John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation. John will address Conference on Wednesday 22nd June 2005 during the morning session of Conference.

Ms. Ann Douglas, President of Scottish Trades Union Congress. Ann will address Conference on Wednesday 22nd June 2005 during the morning session of Conference.

Guest Speakers

14. The Executive Council have invited speakers from the Congress Centres for the Unemployed and from the Congress Retired Workers Committee to address Conference.

The times at which the guest speakers will be address Conference will be given in Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Biennial Delegate Conference - Belfast 2005

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 2

Guests and Fraternal Addresses

1. In addition to the fraternal addresses listed in paragraph 13 of Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1, other guests will be invited to address Conference on the following days and times (times are provisional and subject to confirmation):

Ms. Barbara Ehrenreich, Author of "Nickle and Dimed" will be invited to address Conference during the morning session of Conference on Tuesday 21st June.

Mr. Trevor Ringland, will give a presentation on the "One Small Step" project at the end of the Conference session on Wednesday 22nd June. The "One Small Step" project is a project aimed at fostering better cross community relations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Sweeney, Senior Policy Analyst at the National Economic and Social Council will be invited to address Conference during the morning session of Conference on Thursday 23rd June.

Mr. Brendan Conway, the representative of the Congress Disability Committee will be invited to address Conference between 9.30 and 11.00 on Thursday 23rd June.

Mr. Charlie Hammond, the representative of the Congress Retired Workers' Committee will be invited to address Conference between 11.00 and 13.00 on Thursday 23rd June.

Mr. Bertie Ahern, An Taoiseach, will be invited to make a keynote address to Conference at 11.00 on Thursday 23rd June.

Ms. Madeline Bunting, Author of "Willing Slaves" will be invited to address Conference during the afternoon session of Conference on Thursday 23rd June.

Ms. Deirdre Smyth, the representative of the Congress Centres Network will be invited to address Conference between 14.30 and 17.30 on Thursday 23rd June.

A-FREEK-A a group associated with the Congress sponsored project ADREAM will give a performance at the close of Conference on Wednesday 22nd June.

Elections

2. Standing Orders Committee has examined the nominations for election of Officers and members of the Congress Executive Council and the Standing Orders Committee and confirms that the nominations are in order.

Procedure for Elections

3. The procedure for balloting and the election of the Congress Executive Council is set out in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Standing Orders Committee Report No.1.
4. Delegates are advised to ensure that they have their delegate card with them at the times indicated in Paragraph 2 of Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1 so it can be exchanged for a voting card.
5. The Standing Orders Committee notes that the three persons nominated for election as Vice-President are also candidates in the election of the Executive Council. Since two of the persons involved will be elected as Vice-President and, thereby, be a member of the Executive Council, they cannot also be a continuing candidate in the election of the Executive Council. The ballot papers for all elections will be returned at the same time so that, at the time that ballot papers for the election of the Executive Council are completed, delegates will not know which of the candidates for election as Vice-President will be successful and, therefore, not eligible to be elected to the Executive Council.
6. In light of the above, and for the purpose of clarity, Standing Orders Committee recommends that the following procedure be followed during the counting of votes:
 - The first election to be counted by the Scrutineers will be the election of the Vice-Presidents;
 - When they come to count the ballot papers for the election of the Executive Council, the Scrutineers will, therefore, know which of the two candidates for election as Vice-President has been elected and are not continuing candidates for election to the Executive Council;
 - Any preferences shown on the Executive Council ballot papers for the persons who have already been elected as Vice-President will

still reckon in the election on the basis that, in the case of any ballot paper which shows a preference marked for the persons elected as Vice-President, that preference will be ignored and the next preference shown on such ballot paper will be the operative preference for purposes of the election. Thus, for example, in the case of a ballot paper which shows a No.1 Preference for the persons elected as Vice-President, a candidate who is shown as receiving a No.2 Preference will be deemed to have received a No.1 Preference on that Ballot Paper and similarly for lower preferences.

Appointment of Delegates

6. Standing Orders Committee has examined the list of delegates appointed by affiliated organisations and confirms that they are in order.
7. 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

8. The following organisations/projects have been granted permission to have display stands in the Conference Centre: ADream Project, Amnesty International, Benenden Healthcare, Congress, Construction Workers Health Trust, Department of Education & Learning, Equal Community Initiative, Education and Training Services, EURES, FÁS, Health & Safety Executive Northern Ireland, Irish Labour History Society, James Connolly Film, Labour Relations Agency, Moore Stephens, National Centre for Partnership and Performance, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, National Qualifications Authority Ireland, The Pensions Board, Personal Injuries Assessment Board, Special EU Programme Body, Thompson McClure and Unity Trust Bank. Delegates are advised that the Construction Workers Health Trust will be carrying out health screening for delegates during Conference, free of charge. It is envisaged that there will be significant demand for this service and the Construction Workers Health Trust have asked that delegates who wish to avail of the service make an appointment by visiting their display stand in the exhibition area of the Conference Centre.
9. The Standing Orders Committee has also given permission to representatives of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to ask delegates to participate in a survey to be conducted during Conference. The survey relates to visitors' perception of Belfast as a venue for a Conference. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Biennial Delegate Conference Belfast 2005

Standing Orders Committee Report Number Three

Standing Orders Committee wish to inform delegates that John Tierney has withdrawn his nomination for election to the position of vice-president. Therefore the two remaining candidates Rosheen Callender and Patricia McKeown are deemed elected un-opposed.

Standing Orders Committee wish to inform delegates that Barney Lawn has withdrawn his nomination for election to the Congress Executive Council. Therefore the thirty remaining candidates are deemed elected un-opposed.

There is therefore no need for elections on this occasion.

Standing Orders Committee wish to inform delegates that the Galway Trades Council have withdrawn motion number 49 on Public Holidays.

Standing Orders wishes to inform Conference that a further Standing Orders Committee Report will be given to Conference at the state of proceedings tomorrow morning. This report will detail how the remaining business of Conference is to be concluded.

EMERGENCY MOTION NO.1

Conference recognises that policy governing the health insurance market in the Republic has been based on the principle of community rating, which means that everyone pays the same premium irrespective of their age or health status. According to Government policy and the law, community rating is supposed to be underpinned by 'risk equalisation', which essentially involves a cash transfer from insurers with a lower cost of claims to those with a higher risk-base due to the fact that they cater for older and/or less healthy subscribers.

Despite the critical importance of risk equalisation to maintaining community rating in a competitive market, Government has failed to introduce it leading to considerable instability in the health insurance market. This instability has undermined the position of the VHI and, if not addressed quickly, could lead to significant increases in premiums which would disproportionately affect older subscribers and even threaten the sustainability of the company.

Conference notes the fact that before the end of this month, the Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney TD, will have to decide whether or not to introduce risk equalisation into the Irish health insurance market. While recognising that the Minister indicated earlier this month that she is minded to do so, Conference is conscious that there are many interests actively lobbying the Minister not to introduce risk equalisation. Conference calls on the Minister to proceed with her stated intention and introduce risk equalisation by the month's end.

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