



MARTIN GOULD
SERTUC PRESIDENT
OPENING REMARKS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS
2003-2014

2003

Trades Union Congress
Southern and Eastern Regional Council



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 19 APRIL 2003 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 74 delegates, 60 delegates from 17 trade unions and 19 delegates from 5 CATCs.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President welcomed delegates to the AGM and made the following introductory remarks:

- The President remarked on the sad loss of comrades and friends during the year including Tom Durkin and Bill Osborne. The President noted the retirement from the Regional Council of Pete Turner and Peter Spalding. All had contributed greatly to the work of the Regional Council.
- There could be no long-term peace in the Middle East until Palestine is recognised as a viable state with the 1967 borders and Palestinian and Israeli people have mutually assured security.
- The Saddam regime had been overthrown by a coalition that does not have widely recognised legitimacy. It is critical that UN Inspectors return and lead the search for weapons of mass destruction, and that the UN leads the reconstruction of the country and that the UN enables the Iraqi people to elect a government.
- The FBU remain in industrial dispute with the employers and the Government and the threat of an imposed settlement is a direct threat to the principle of collective bargaining in Britain. The FBU deserves the Regional Councils ongoing support.
- The review of the Employment Relations Act will offer little progress for workers. The Employers lobby have the Government's ear. Unions must fight for better trade union and employment rights and for the TUC's Charter.
- May Day 2003 will be supported throughout the region. The national TUC is a partner in the London May Day, to promote the charter of Workers Rights.
- The President thanked the workers in the Regional Office for their commitment and diligence during the year, which had been a difficult one due to the poor health of the Regional Secretary.
- The President took the opportunity, on behalf of the Regional Council, to wish Mick the best of health in the future.

2004

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2004 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 74 delegates, 58 delegates from 21 trade unions and 16 delegates from 5 CATCs.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President welcomed delegates to the AGM and made the following introductory remarks:

- “Jean Marie Le Pen, the leader of the French Fascist party, Le Front Nationale, is visiting Birmingham today and intends to speak at a BNP meeting. Unions in the Midlands, the Midlands TUC and Unite Against Fascism are organising a rally, are seeking to determine exactly where and when Le Pen is speaking with view to holding a counter demonstration, hoping to persuade him and the BNP to abort his visit and speech.
- Ten of thousands of civil servants in this region have a deeply insecure future because they are threatened with relocation or redundancy. SERTUC will do all it can to support the PCS and other civil service unions in their campaigns to secure their members’ interests.
- The President expressed Regional Council’s dismay at ongoing privatisation, such as Foundation hospitals and the threatened re-franchising of South East Trains.
- The President noted ongoing crisis in occupational pensions.
- The President noted ongoing crisis in manufacturing, with approximately 10,000 job losses every month and that the total number of jobs lost in the sector since the Government was elected in 1997 is nearly one million.
- The Labour Government remains very timid about individual employment rights and hostile to collective rights. Unions need a massive campaign if they are to achieve the aspirations expressed in composite 1.
- Following the illegal invasion of Iraq chaos dominates, the state of Israel’s persecution of the Palestinian people is deepening, with settlements extending, the building of the wall and the ruthless security measures and the persecution of trade unionists continues in Colombia. These issues, among others, demand that every trade unionist has an internationalist perspective.
- The President remarked on the sad loss of comrades and friends, such as Bill Freeman, during the year. The President noted that some delegates will have retired from the Regional Council and he thanked them for the contribution they had made.”

2005

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 14 MAY 2005 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 83 delegates, 63 delegates from 18 trade unions and 20 delegates from 5 CATCs

Please note that the AGM coincided with an AMICUS national conference so there were a number of unavoidable absences in addition to apologies.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

"The President asked the meeting to remember comrades and friends lost during the year, all would be missed by trade unionists in the region but he wished to mention two in particular:

- Eve Hudson, GMB, was a member of the SERTUC Executive Committee and Secretary to Women's Rights Committee for many years. SERTUC arranged transport to assist Executive Committee members and her many colleagues and friends to attend her funeral.
- Ron Todd, was of course General Secretary of the TGWU, but when Regional Secretary, he was a member of the SERTUC Executive Committee. Ron's life and work were lived according to solid working class values. He stood up for the working class, the trade union movement and his union during the dark days of Thatcherism.

Eve, Ron and indeed all lost comrades will be greatly missed.

There was a minutes silence in respect.

The President welcomed delegates to the meeting.

At the General Elections most unions backed Labour, recognising the achievement of the continuing investment in health and education, hoping to build on the commitments made in the Warwick Accord and to defeat the Tories and the far-right. So a Labour win must be welcomed.

The Tories campaign had been founded on fear and xenophobia, the BNP's on racism. Both won votes and influenced the political agenda, shifting it to the right. Even in victory, unions cannot and will not ignore the threat of racism and xenophobia in politics, national or local.

The core desires of working people for justice and fairness at work, and in society are not prioritised or recognised in Labour's agenda so unions must step up our campaigns.

And immense questions remain unanswered about the war in Iraq and the so called war on terror.

The third Labour term will only be historic if it provides gains for working people including better employment rights – as described in Composite 1.

The Government's opposition to the European Parliament's wish to extend the full provisions of the Working Time Directive to Britain is a very bad start. Britain's long hours working culture is more Dickens than twenty first century and belies Labour's claim to be a modern party.

And people voted for a better health service, not for privatisation.

Trade unions will not tolerate attacks on their members and will resist sackings and redundancies as is demonstrated by the dispute at Ambala Foods, dispute at BBC over the proposed 4000 redundancies and resistance to redundancies in the finance and banking sectors.

The President thanked the Regional Office, members of the previous Executive Committee, Regional Council and Sub-Groups for their work in 2004-2005 and looked forward to another successful year. "

2006

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 6 MAY 2006 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 79 delegates, 60 delegates from 19 trade unions and 19 delegates from 7 CATCs

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President asked the meeting to remember comrades and friends lost during the year, such as Catherine Barton (PCS), and those struggling for good health, such as Margaret Moss (NORFOLK CATC) and Norrie Slater (USDAW).

The local election results were alarmingly poor and should serve as a warning to the Government. Labour lost 300 council seats, half of the losses being in London. The Tories won 300 and the BNP made advances, with perhaps as many as 20 BNP councillors in the SERTUC region. Crass comments during the election by a London MP were a factor, but that mistake should not obscure the greater and long standing failure to address the needs and aspirations of working people on issues such as housing, quality employment and health. Defeating the far right is a major challenge for all of us, one that we must meet week in week out.

The Government might blame wretched media headlines but the reality is that delivery on core issues has been weak. People do not want privatisation, pension decay, international instability and NHS job losses and service cuts. People do want respect and justice at work.

As events unfold in Iraq it becomes clearer every day that the invasion of Iraq was not only illegal but very misjudged. Vilification of Syria and Iran by the USA fosters further uncertainty and there seems to be little diplomatic pressure to secure peace and justice for all in Palestine. There is some good news in international affairs, with progressive and democratic governments in Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia and Cuba.

This will be Mick Connolly's last Regional Council as Regional Secretary. Mick has given terrific service to the region. Megan Dobney has been appointed as regional Secretary Designate. Mick has been a lifelong trade unionist and activist. His commitment, enthusiasm and leadership have been great assets and the region has maintained its reputation for radical politics and active campaigning founded on working class values.

The President thanked the Regional Office, members of the previous Executive Committee, Regional Council and Sub-Groups for their work in 2005-06 and looked forward to another successful year.

2007

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE TUC THIS TOOK PLACE ON SATURDAY 28 APRIL 2007 AT 10.00 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 114 delegates, 88 delegates from 17 trade unions and 26 delegates from 8 CATCS

- The Regional Council upheld apologies tendered by delegates standing for the Executive Committee: Tony Carter (Cambridgeshire CATC), Louis McDonald (Hampshire CATC) and Adrian Weir (TGWU) as reasons given for absence were accepted.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President asked the meeting to remember comrades and friends lost during the year and noted it was International Workers Memorial Day with a march and rally being held in Central London which unfortunately clashed with the AGM but, the matter is dealt with in some depth as the agenda features 2 speakers on the subject.

There was a minute's silence.

The President made the following introductory remarks:

- Media coverage giving details of the appalling statistics showing increase levels of accidents and deaths in the workplace. Alan Ritchie (General Secretary, UCATT) has been highly critical of the HSE pointing out that while accidents are up, prosecutions and convictions are down significantly.
- There is an average of 20 people a week killed on our roads in work related crashes. Often these figures are not included in the accident at work statistics. Major unions are supporting a national petition as part of an ongoing campaign on this issue. The Government has not given sufficient attention to workers' health and safety and not produced on the promises regarding corporate manslaughter. One of the reasons why prosecutions by the HSE are down is because that department has been dealt major cuts, with members in civil service unions having jobs threatened. We need to be clear that when a worker leaves their home to go to work their family is entitled to expect them to return home safely that evening.
- You would have all noted the renewed speculation about the timing of Tony Blair's resignation but the main issue has to be leadership of the Labour party and the Government on his departure. Any candidates standing for Leader or Deputy Leader need to be able to demonstrate that they are in tune with, and prepared to act on, the policies of the movement, not least a firm commitment to support restoring trade union rights to workers in Britain. This means active support for the Trade Union Freedom Bill. If any candidate is not willing to support the Bill I do not think they are worthy of the support of the movement.

- Much of the talk about the leadership arises from the forthcoming local elections that affect the East of England and the South East. The fight against the far right and the BNP is one of our top priorities, regularly reported upon and featured in our Annual Report. The BNP has mobilised its forces and has candidates standing in elections (on 3 May) at an unprecedented level. In the time left before we go to ballot we too must mobilise and ensure they are defeated.
- May Day approaching gives us an opportunity to mobilise? The constant themes for the rally are human rights, trade union rights and international solidarity, and in broad terms that covers our objectives and the work we undertake. As well London we have rallies throughout the region including Ipswich, Norwich, Chelmsford and Bedford. The PCS have confirmed that they will be taking strike action on May Day in response to the government's attack on their pay, jobs and working conditions, one of many attacks workers are witnessing. So let us mobilise on May Day and make it a day of real working class solidarity.

2008

Trades Union Congress

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE TUC: SATURDAY 26 APRIL 2008 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 100 delegates, 75 delegates from 17 trade unions and 25 delegates from 8 CATCS

- The Regional Council accepted apologies tendered by delegates standing for the Executive Committee: Jack Amos (BECTU), John Onslow (GMB), Greg Grant, Mary Pearson (Unison) and Jennie Bremner (Unite).

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President asked the meeting to remember comrades and friends lost during the year including: Steve Sinnott (NUT), Mick Benfield (Unite) and Greg Tucker (RMT).

There was a minute's silence.

The President made the following introductory remarks:

- Best wishes and support to all workers engaged in struggle over the recent period.
- We have seen teachers organised by the NUT taking national strike action for the first time in 21 years. Picket lines and demonstrations were held all over the country. 10,000 marched (with the SERTUC banner present) in London to Central Hall Westminster to a highly successful rally, plus keynote speakers including Brendan Barber.

NUT Teachers are demanding a pay increase in line with inflation, nearly twice the offer that the Government are making.

Lecturers from the UCU were also demonstrating.

- PCS Members were also taking action, up to 80,000 civil servants, coastguards, and members of the Transport Department and other Government departments, all defending living standards and calling for an end to the scapegoating of low paid workers.
- Outside the region 20,000 local authority workers in Birmingham stop work in order to try and maintain pay and conditions.
- 1,200 skilled workers at the Grangemouth Oil Refinery in Scotland voted overwhelmingly to withdraw their labour in defence of their own and future workers' pensions.
- We also send our congratulations to the South African Dockers (COSATU members) in Durban who refused to unload a shipment of arms destined for Zimbabwe, acting in the best traditions of international trade unionism. This also reflects action taken by British Dockers who in 1920 led by Harry Pollett and Sylvia Pankhurst, refused to allow the Jolly George ship to take arms to fight against the new Soviet Union.

Had this action in Durban taken place in a British port it would have been illegal under laws New Labour have still refused to repeal.

- Since the last meeting we have seen a change of policy from the British Treasury, a loosening of the purse strings, not of benefit to workers such as Remploy workers fighting factory closures, but to prop up UK failing financial institutions.

£50 billion for Northern Rock, with another £50 billion for the banks, while at the same time removing the 10p tax band affecting lower paid workers. Handouts to the mega rich while poverty, benefits and poor housing remain a disfiguring feature of the economy.

Is this an example of a class divided society? Does it show where New Labour loyalties really lie?

- Please note the latest edition of the SERTUC Newsletter highlighting the campaign throughout the region concerning 1 May Mayoral election, urging people to register and then vote.
- National Front and BNP candidates are standing across the region, including for the London Assembly and for Mayor. In the East of England there are over 100 BNP candidates. In the South East 25 BNP candidates. We must ensure a no vote for the far right.
- We must also not forget the traditional May Day march and celebrations organised by the movement throughout our region: Ipswich, Bedford, London and elsewhere, are organising marches and rallies.

The theme of the London May Day march this year is trade union rights, human rights and international solidarity.

2009

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MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGION OF THE TUC THAT TOOK PLACE ON SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2009 AT 10.00 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 104 delegates, 80 delegates from 17 trade unions and 24 delegates from 8 CATCS

It was noted that large quota of BECTU and USDAW apologies was due to union conferences being held.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE VICE PRESIDENT

The President asked the meeting to remember comrades and friends lost since the last meeting, including: John Onslow, GMB; SERTUC Executive Committee and Regional Council delegate and Jack Jones, Unite; who 30 years ago set up the Pensioners Movement as an umbrella organisation for trade unions.

The President also gave details on Jack Jones funeral arrangements on May Day: Honor Oak Crematorium, 10.45am. This was noted.

There was a minute's silence.

The Vice President made the following introductory remarks:

- Since the last meeting we have seen the divisions apparent in society. The rich are richer and the gap between those who have and those who do not is ever wider. Despite the economic downturn the government still defend big business and high finance, and in doing so turns its back on the democratic and social ownership of essential parts of the economy.
- Billions are dished out to the banks, many of which are now owned by the taxpayer, but still operate on behalf of the super-rich dominating the British economy. The G20 has come and gone, with much and hype and expectation, giving the Prime Minister the chance to tour the international stage whilst offer little prospect of any real change to the problems faced like poverty and climate change, to name a few. These issues are only addressed through the needs of the world leading economies.
- The G20 did have an impact in other ways. Put People First organised demonstration with TUC support was great success, uniting many groups concerned with economic crisis, recession, banks, inequality, etc. This was followed a few days later by sections of the police appearing to riot in the City of London, tactics which resulted in injuries and loss of life and further attacks on our democratic rights. This must be and has been challenged.

- Possibly the last budget before the general election, this was chance for the government to ally itself with working people and their families. But I am afraid this was a chance lost. Once the Tories and their class have got over their ritual moans about attacks on wealth they will be rubbing their hands with joy. The budget does little to redress the balance of wealth and power. Billions of pounds are found to save the banking system while young and old are asked to pay for it.
- Unemployment continuing to rise. Further privatisations. Massive cuts in social services and job losses. Undermining of living standards. The poor left in poverty and the homeless still without homes.
- If there are to be cuts why not start with the misnamed defence budget. We could save 70 billion on the Trident replacement. 20 billion on the Euro Fighter project. 16 billion on 2 new aircraft carriers. Or we could abandon the ID card system which is reported to be costing tax payers approximately 5 billion pounds.
- We need a budget that addresses in equality in society, creates jobs, not least in manufacturing and raises pensions and benefits. We to see privatisation reversals, especially within transports and utilities; and make sure the Post office services remain public.
- All this would mean a change to big business agenda of Blair government, and now Brown. This is the challenge before us which we must rise to accept.
- In the last month we have seen the multinational Visteon sack its workforce with 6 minutes notice in order to transfer production elsewhere to boost profits. The workers and unions have not accepted this and are picketing and conducting occupations, demanding that their terms and conditions underwritten by the Ford motor company is honoured.

I was happy to give SERTUC support to recent Enfield and Basildon plant rallies.

- I welcome the re-election of the ANC in South Africa. The forces of reaction in South Africa have been defeated and the threat from the far right rejected.
- The EU elections will soon be upon us and we have a chance to send a message of rejection of the policies of neo-liberalism that have led to this recession. Above all we must throw back the threat of the National Front and BNP.
- I hope delegates will join us on the Islington Tolpuddle rally and celebration of the 175 year anniversary of the great London demonstration to force the repeal of the sentences on the Tolpuddle martyrs and to gain their freedom.
- Please support May Day, traditional London May Day demonstration with themes close to the heart of the region, and there are also other May Day rallies and celebrations throughout the region which need your support.

2010

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2010 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 97 delegates, 74 delegates from 17 trade unions and 21 delegates from 5 CATCS plus 2 Observers

It was noted that USDAW and TUC Black Workers Conference were being held on the same day as the Regional Council.

There was also card circulated for Faith Matyszak, Sussex CATC, who was unwell.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President asked the meeting to remember comrades and friends lost since the last meeting, including particularly Jack Amos (BECTU), SERTUC Executive Committee member and Chair of SERTUC's Creative & Leisure Industries Committee.

There was a minute's silence in respect of their memories and contribution.

The President made the following introductory remarks:

- Since the last meeting we have seen the divisions apparent in society. The rich are richer and the gap between those who have and those who have not is ever wider. Despite the economic downturn the government still defends big business and high finance, and in doing so turns its back on the democratic and social ownership of essential parts of the economy.
- The election campaign is dominated by a consensus amongst the three parties and media that the economic crisis caused by the system they all support has to be paid for by large scale cuts in public services, job losses and cuts in living standards.
- We are told we cannot afford decent pensions so they must be cut. And to add insult to injury we hear from David Cameron that we are in this together? Try explaining this to the civil service workers, rail workers, British Airways staff, and the unemployed. Tell it to the thousands on council waiting lists, or those living in poverty in old age surviving on benefits.
- We have an alternative, part of which can be found in the People's Charter, TUC policy which seems to be forgotten about. Government suggest the top 10% in society own 50% of the wealth, four trillion pounds. IF we are all in this together let's have some redistribution.

- The Tax Justice Network and PCS have estimated that £70bn a year is lost through tax avoidance and nearly £28bn went uncollected last year by the Inland Revenue, not because they are not doing their jobs but because many of those are being cut back. Our government does not seem to have the will to move effectively in this area and collect taxes that are due.
- We have bailed out the banks in an attempt to avoid recession. We should use these banks to help find a solution to the problems by creating investment. Investment in capital projects, manufacturing and skills, and in building homes. All this together with the scrapping of Trident and bringing troops home from Afghanistan could go towards balancing the books and resolving economic problems without creating misery for millions of people.
- The general election is forthcoming and for most of us the choice is between Labour and the Tories. To vote for Cameron seems to be unthinkable with their plan to hit working people quicker and harder. So we are left with the Labour option. We need to be clear that the movement support for Labour is not unconditional. The trade unions have to up their political game and demand and campaign much more effectively. We have a right to expect openness and accountability. We will not tolerate being made to pay the price for capitalism's crisis. Market forces and privatisation is not the answer. And cuts in services and benefits are definitely not the answer. But the reality is in current circumstances we have to look towards returning Labour to power. Labour has to listen and act in the interest of us the people.
- Amongst our political agenda always has to be support for May Day which is an integral part of the movement.

2011

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 16 APRIL 2011 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 96 delegates, 71 delegates from 16 trade unions and 25 delegates from 10 CATCS plus 2 Observers

It was noted that USDAW annual conference was being held on the same day as the Regional Council.

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President welcomed delegates and made the following introductory remarks:

- We predicted that the election of David Cameron and a capitalist coalition would be a disaster for British workers. Two Tory budgets has seen a massive of transfer of wealth towards the super-rich, whilst economic crisis due to reckless, barely regulated banks are left with the public to contend with, the same public who at general election gave no mandate for such attacks.
- The ConDem coalition seeks to undo advances made by working class struggle over the decades. Young people and students have shown their courage to take the government on in defence of higher education. They marched often with the support of unions, teachers, and lecturers and in some cases parents. Despite their efforts the government has increased student fees with £9,000 per annum becoming standard cost rather than exception. This denies thousands of working class and middle class children the opportunity to attend university.
- Young people have little or no chance of entering the property market with mortgages being beyond their reach. Social housing is becoming a distant memory, and those in council housing are having their security threatened alongside those unfortunate enough to be on benefits.
- Pensions are at risk especially government or local authority workers. The welfare state is coming under increasing attacks as the cuts bite deeper also causing dramatic effect to essential services as unemployment rises. These cuts threaten to extend to the armed forces and police.
- The media would like us to believe these actions are inevitable as they push the big business agenda. Growing numbers are rejecting this outlook as their day to day experience tells them who is to blame.

We need to have an alternative to the propaganda and therefore need to supports papers like *The Morning Star*.

- The TUC Alternative March Demonstration, 26 March, saw 500,000 support and show they won't tolerate government, City or bankers squeezing ordinary people in the name of untold wealth and profits. All who marched were representatives of thousands more who can and must be mobilised for ongoing fight back which has to be taken back the communities and work places developing more action and solidarity.

We need to see future TUC initiatives on a range of issues including National Health Service, housing, pensions, social services, education and rising unemployment.

The PCS union has indicated they are likely to ballot over pensions and jobs. The POA are balloting over prison privatisations. The RCN totally opposed the undermining of the NHS and may ballot for industrial action. Unite Members at BA have voted for strike action and await the outcome of further negotiations. It is our job to support these unions and groups whether it is trade unions taking on employers or initiatives some local service. Solidarity is the key.

- As well as trade unionists we are voters and there are local elections in May. The Prime Minister's racist rant on immigration shows how worried the government is and we have to reach out to people and demonstrate politically as well as industrially that the cuts are not acceptable. We reject the government strategy of the public paying for the big business crisis.
- We need to mobilise for May Day and see good turnouts across the region. Whilst we fight are battles we must not forget the key message of May Day which is internationalism, be it Tunisia, Egypt, Libya or struggles in Palestine.
- We have a credible alternative that people can believe and fight for. That alternative includes ensuring that all tax due is collected, taxing the already rich, introducing a Robin Hood Tax and building an economy based on growth and investment, whilst looking forward to a better society.

2012

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2012 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 121 delegates, 97 delegates from 16 trade unions and 24 delegates from 7 CATCs plus 2 Observers

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President welcomed delegates and made the following introductory remarks:

- Unite, the union representing fuel tanker drivers, seem to have averted the threat of further strike action after talks with employers at the conciliation service ACAS working to create a satisfactory deal ending the long-running dispute over terms and conditions. This is a welcome victory for the union and the movement and a wakeup call for the Government.
- SERTUC is a progressive campaigning organisation that always needs to develop and reach out ever more to affiliates, members and movement in the South East engaged in struggle. The recent budget saw a further transference of wealth from the poor to the already rich.
- Anything for the social good, including social services, education, NHS, Royal Mail and even stretching to the armed forces, is under threat of being sold off and privatised. The movement against this proposed action still needs to be stronger and we have to build on the battles before us assisting local campaigns and communities where necessary. People are looking for leadership from the opposition to government and more importantly leadership from the movement.
- There have been examples of leadership from the unions on issues of pensions which saw education and civil service unions host a national strike and demonstration through London.

In September the TUC General Council agreed a two year campaign to defend government and local pensions and we saw magnificent action take place on 30 November, over three million people stopped work with demonstrations both regionally and nationally.

- The capitalist press have sold the idea that it was Labour's spending policies that caused the crisis? Spending policies that Cameron supported in his first year as Tory leader. Members are increasingly questioning this and likely to resist the austerity agenda as it unfolds.
- While the City and multinationals pile up millions in profit and the budget pampers the

wealthy, our members and the public are faced with job losses, unemployment, pay freezes and cuts to the social wage.

- The confidence and determination seen on 30 November has to be taken forward on all fronts. International capitalism and the EU are seeking to put the bankers' crisis on all workers worldwide. We have a duty to support each other, as we see with May Day celebrations throughout the region.
- Regional local elections, Assembly and Mayoral Elections are forthcoming and we urge all for the sake of London and a message to the government to vote for a change of Mayor on 3 May.
- We need general support for the TUC's Workers' Charter

The movement and working class cannot afford to let the government undermine living standards with their austerity agenda as we have the alternatives necessary but must fight on all matters.

2013

Trades Union Congress

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 20 APRIL 2013 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 117 delegates, 96 delegates from 18 trade unions and 21 delegates from 7 CATCs plus 12 Observers

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The President welcomed delegates and made the following introductory remarks:

- The recent budget did nothing to bring growth to the economy, create jobs, build homes or boost manufacturing. The rich and poor divide has gets bigger as the Government penalise the poor further with welfare reforms.

The Bedroom Tax introduction means that if you are on benefits and have a spare room you will lose £14 from your benefits.

Bromley, Croydon, Enfield and Haringey have been selected for pilot schemes on penalising the poor which if the government feels has the desired affect will impact the poor on a national level, introduced by ministers with a spare house and with no cuts to their benefits.

- Margaret Thatcher's recent passing still leaves the movement with her legacy as anti-trade union laws are still upheld and the ConDem alliance continues attacks by limiting workers' rights further without union consultation.

Thatcher's achievement for selling council housing is now seen for the massive fraud it was as we experience massive housing shortages and the house price bubble.

To underline the effect GMB have produced a report that show in Wandsworth 40% of homes sold off are now in the hands of private landlords, with property millionaires often owning dozens of previously owned council houses.

In London rents have risen eight times the rates of wages in the last year alone.

When basic industries such as gas, water and transport were privatised under Thatcher, shares were quickly returned to the financial institutions, city and big businesses.

A share owning democracy was and is a fraud.

- People through austerity are feeling increasingly alienated and it is the job of the movement to fight back and we need to be at the forefront of all future TUC led action proposed.

- We note Nicholas Maduro from the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela recent election victory. We also congratulate ex Regional Council and Executive Committee delegate, Adrian Weir, Unite Assistant Chief of Staff, for being invited as observer and confirming free and fair ballot.
- We celebrate May Day in London, Ipswich, Oxford and other places in outside the region.
- On 2 May we have local election where people have the opportunity to show their disgust at the government's lack of performance and vote for something better.

Let our legacy for 2013 be the beginning of an effective fight back against the government and support all unions in their struggles including Unite members at Ford Dagenham battling closure.

2014

Trades Union Congress

Southern and Eastern Regional Council



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN & EASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL, SATURDAY 26 APRIL 2014 AT 10 AM IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON WC1B 3LS

There were 110 delegates, 83 delegates from 17 trade unions and 27 delegates from 7 CATCs plus 14 Observers

1. OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

The Regional Council recognised the passing of Bob Crow, RMT; Tony Benn MP; Elizabeth Audars, Oxfordshire CATC; activist Jim Mortimer; Mary Alice, Unionlearn Midlands Regional Manager; Brian Kelly, BECTU; Stuart Barber, UNISON and Nelson Mandela.

This was a massive loss to the movement. A minute's silence was held in their memory.

The **President** welcomed delegates and Council thanked the Unite London and Eastern region for *Morning Star* circulation sponsorship for meeting.

The following introductory remarks were made:

- We were all shocked and dismayed to learn of the deaths of Bob Crow and Tony Benn, both keen supporters of SERTUC work, and committed to the interests of the trade unions and the working class.

SERTUC send condolences to their family and friends and continue the struggle for fairness and equality.
- According to the Government the recession is now over as proven with the recent Budget announced. But for Barclays employees faced with the threat of redundancy and others suffering in the job market may think differently. The budget was designed to sustain wealth and power for the elite while penalise the poor.
- Nearly one million young people are unemployed and can only dream of a home of their own. Many people who have jobs often suffer low pay, part-time or zero hour contracts.
- The economy remains massively unbalanced due to the £1.3 trillion bailout given to the bankers. The government continue to borrow, missing their own economic targets.
- The government's agenda to undermine the poor and vulnerable is blatant and we need to do all we can to support workers, their families and unions.
- UKIP campaigning and coverage is something we must not ignore and SERTUC has produced a booklet *Truth, Lies and Migrants*, another tool to combat misinformation.

- We thank SERTUC Sub Groups for all their hard work and campaigning outlined in the Annual Report.
- This autumn the TUC will organise a mass demonstration in London under the banner of Britain Needs a Pay Rise, supported by SERTUC. It will take place on Saturday 18 October 2014, and will begin with a march through central London, culminating in a rally in Hyde Park.
- We celebrate May Day in London, Ipswich, Oxford and other places in the region.

The focus of the London May Day march and rally will be to pay tribute to Bob Crow and Tony Benn and look towards future mobilising.