

# Trades Union Council Annual Conference

**Crewe Alexandra FC, 13 - 14 June 2015**

**Report by Hugh Kirkbride, Bristol TUC**

The 2015 Trades Council Conference was my second as President of Bristol TUC. I was therefore more familiar with the format, and able to make more interventions.

The TUCJCC report was accepted, but I did make the point that some TUC campaigns need to be better focussed and timed, and that the TUCJCC could make more constructive contributions to General Council decisions on the practicality of these campaigns at local level.

The guest speakers were:

James Harrison from the Institute of Employment Rights (IER), who raised several interesting ideas that went well beyond employment rights, although there was no time to discuss them. He agreed to circulate his speech via the TUCJCC.

Lynn Collins, North West Regional Secretary of the TUC, whose speech was positive, constructive, and funny.

The rest of the conference was taken up with motions submitted by County Associations of Trades Councils. Bristol qualifies as a County Association but we had not submitted any motions.

The main topics of debate were:

## **Attacks on PCS and TU Organisation:**

There were six separate motions with similar sentiments expressing the movement's need to support PCS in particular. I did vote against the motion that called for the waiving of PCS affiliation fees to trades councils, but all six motions were passed.

## **Anti-Trade Union Laws:**

During this debate, Steve Gillan, General Secretary of POA, pointed out that his union had consistently broken the extremely restrictive laws facing them, and would continue to do so. Other delegates also highlighted how challenging the laws was the only way to move the industrial struggle forward.

## **Welfare Issues:**

This was not one debate, but rather a series of one-off motions, most of which were uncontroversial. I seconded the amendment to a motion calling for local anti-cuts conferences, which called for such work to be co-ordinated through the People's Assembly. In doing so I cited several Bristol examples.

## **Austerity:**

This debate was built around five different emergency motions which all dealt with the situation of the labour movement in the wake of the 2015 General Election. So it effectively became a debate about the crisis of working class political representation. I spoke in this debate referring to a couple of the motions, but also about the central role of the Morning Star in the anti-austerity struggles.

### **Trans-Atlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP):**

While there was clearly a consensus that TTIP was a real threat to the labour movement, there were differences of opinion on tactics. This led to the rejection of an amendment that sought certain safeguards rather than outright opposition. This meant that a position of outright opposition was adopted.

### **Equalities:**

A motion that sought to water down the TUCJCC's commitment to representation of women was heavily defeated.

### **Cities and Local Government:**

In supporting Greater Manchester TUC's motion opposing DevoManc, I pointed out that no other city would want to suffer Bristol's recent experience.

### **Trades Councils and the TUC:**

2014's motion to Congress had called for Trades Councils to have the right to move their own motion. This was lost when key unions, who had indicated that they would support, failed to do so. A motion to the same effect was presented to the Crewe conference, and the mover asked that we supported it as the Congress motion. I made the point that there was no point in continually submitting the same motion if we were going to be knocked back, and asked for assurances that the work had been done to ensure that the result would be different if we did put the motion forward to Congress. The assurances were not as robust as I had hoped, but there appears to be a chance of getting it through, and so I eventually supported that this be the Congress motion, as did the conference.

### **Andy Robertson:**

At the close of conference, there was a presentation to thank Bristol TUC Secretary, Andy Robertson, who was standing down after 18 consecutive years on the TUCJCC.

**Hugh Kirkbride**  
**President, Bristol Trades Union Council**