

TUC DISABLED WORKERS' CONFERENCE 2017

HELD AT Congress House, Great Russell Street, London

From RAY LUDFORD GLATUC DISABILITY OFFICER

The Conference was held over two days. It consisted of Addresses from TUC speakers and Resolutions submitted by Trade Unions.

The Conference took place against the background of Austerity, the General Election Campaign and Brexit. Corbyn is campaigning against Austerity and defied “Conventional Wisdom” that says elections can only be won from the “centre ground” and discussion of inequality, poverty, the Housing Crisis, Food Banks etc. are taboo and off limits. The peddlers of this Conventional Wisdom do NOT mention that since the election of Thatcher the “centre ground” has been dragged further and further to the Right. Like Bernie Sanders, Jeremy Corbyn is offering us something better than the “same old same old”.

Theresa May will use Brexit as an excuse for “Austerity Forever”. This hides the real aim which is to “shrink the state” regardless of the consequences. The 17th Century state had no Health Service, no organised Police Forces, no State Education, no sanitation in towns and cities. Life was “nasty, brutish and short”. Life expectancy was much lower than now, infant mortality much higher and deaths in childbirth

more common. Is this what the Tories and the “Free Market Fundamentalists” want to drag us back to?

The Resolutions were debated on a group basis. Resolutions on similar subjects were debated together and then voted on individually. All the submitted resolutions were passed most of them by large majorities.

Once Resolutions were put forward by the proposing Unions there was no shortage of speakers from the floor. Not everyone who wished to speak was called. The speeches were thoughtful, the debates generally well-disciplined although some speakers went “over time” when asked to stop. This spoils the overall effect and impact of a speech and provokes irritation from the floor. There were no speeches “against” Resolutions but the Debates were of a generally high standard.

Speakers again and again described how employers time and time again denied workers their legal rights. Fighting tooth and nail against requests for Access to Work which is becoming less accessible than ever. Speakers described discrimination in job interviews, denial of promotions and of course the “Managing Out” of anyone whose disability became a workplace issue.

“Workers’ Rights” are not worth the paper they are written on as long as employers can easily and cheaply dismiss workers on the grounds of “capability and capacity”. This issue is as important as fighting for more rights and the enforcement of existing rights. Management have the means to micro-manage performance and use this against us. Most Managers have

grown up in a sack-happy gung ho “Manage By Fear” culture. It never seems to occur to them that they may be got rid of by a younger rival desperate to “make a name for themselves” when they are older and “a burden on business”.

Thousands of pregnant women are sacked every year... for the “crime” of being pregnant (BBC Radio 4). Bogus self-employment is a plague. Workers lose thousands in wages, lose other benefits of employment while the Treasury loses £Millions. What happens to the much trumpeted Rule of Law when the Tory Government have instructed HMRC NOT to enforce the law against rogue employers?

The impact of Reactionary “Welfare Reforms” was much discussed. These “Reforms” are NOT reforms. They are part of the Project to shrink the state. It is underpinned by a dubious Ideology cooked up and supported by various American Academics as “Science”. This Ideology is the “Bio Psycho Social” Model of Disability. This ideology asserts that there is no such thing as disability or illness. Illness and Disability are “voluntary behaviours” which must be punished. Thus illness is equated with absenteeism, workers are sacked and things like “the Bradford Factor” are cobbled together to provide a justification.

This is the Ideology underpinning “Welfare Reform” unleashed by “Lord” Freud unleashed by Tony Blair. Freud decided that Blairite Labour was not Right Wing enough for him and he joined the Tories.

American Republicans now say “make life worse for the poorest and they will have to struggle harder to escape poverty and misery”. I believe that this thinking is followed by much of the British Establishment even if they don’t say it. Whenever Capitalism goes into Crisis the “Dismal Science” becomes even darker. Sooner or later its ugly Cousin the pseudo-science of Eugenics comes out of the shadows.

Challenged on Disability Issues Theresa May Thatcher has gone very quiet on her plans for future welfare “reform”. While trying to deny “disability” exists the Government grudgingly admit that 20 per cent of British Adults have “significant disabilities” (1984 is back on the best sellers’ list) and with an ageing population this will go up. If she plans to turn Britain into an offshore Tax Haven it means no NHS, low wages, low taxes and no workers’ rights or Trade Unions as nothing must be a “Burden on Business”.

The Conference ended with a screening of *I Daniel Blake*. Even as Ken Loach was picking up his Award the Tories were denouncing him for bias. Their Tory predecessors tried to ban Walter Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole* and when it was filmed they tried to ban the film. We don’t have censorship in Britain, oh dear me, no...

Conference Organisation Issues

An Emergency Resolution was passed concerning access and facilities at Congress House. One Delegate fell off a toilet seat twice. It was broken and “unfit for purpose”. There were issues around Guide and Assistance Dogs. The Disabled

Workers' Conference will not be held at Congress House until these issues have been addressed and resolved.

--

Ray Ludford@gmail.com

020.8674.9471

07748363153