

Trade Union Councils annual conference 24/5 May 2025 report

by Nick Kelleher TUCJCC rep Midlands (West)

This year's Trade Union Councils conference, the last to be held at Congress House (it's being sold) and chaired by ASLEF Assistant General Secretary Simon Weller, was evidence of a vibrant trades union council movement with almost twice the number of delegates as last year.



Tom Mohan was our delegate from Wolverhampton and there were delegates from Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Chesterfield, Derby, Derbyshire and Leicester trades union councils representing the Midlands.

TUC General Secretary Paul Novak opened the conference with his address calling for the recognition of a Palestinian state, for the Employment Rights Bill to be implemented in full and with a message that *"Reform do not and never will represent working class people; that's our job."*



A number of motions dealt with the best ways to increase young people's involvement in trades councils. The drop in young worker trade union membership was described as *"a crisis"* by Fraser Maguire from Derby TUC, the chair of TUC Young Workers. *"Workers who have grown up only knowing austerity and often precarious employment easily become alienated."*

Mike Masters, a striking UNITE bin driver from Birmingham, received a standing ovation from delegates when he addressed the conference. Currently in the tenth week of continuous strike action on top of previous strikes since January in their dispute to protect jobs and against massive pay cuts. *"The Labour council is using commissioners put in by a Tory government to attack workers. Workers should not be made to pay for austerity."* Birmingham City Council has now applied for another injunction against workers picketing. £385 was collected for the strikers by delegates.



In the debate on the opposition to the far right it was raised that Reform are using populist left seeming slogans to attract trade unionists. There is a need to highlight their anti-working class policies and voting records.

Support from around the trades union movement was called for the 7th June People's Assembly demonstration for Welfare not Warfare, to Stop the Cuts and Tax the Rich. Jane Nellist from Coventry TUC noted that *"the number of billionaires has tripled since the 2010 start of austerity"*.



An emergency motion Oppose Disability Benefits Cuts was voted as the motion to go to this year's Trades Union Congress on behalf of trades union councils.

TUC Joint Consultative Committee regional reps elected were: Jane Aitchison (Yorkshire & The Humber), Kevin Allsop (North West), Dave Chapple (South West), Andrew Coburn (East of England), Mick Houghton (London & South East), Nick Kelleher (Midlands West), Martin Levy (North East), Katrine Williams (Wales) and Cecile Wright (Midlands East).

TUC General Council members are Jo Grady (UCU), Steve Gillan (POA) and Simon Weller (ASLEF).

The delegate to Trade Union Congress 2025 is Joe Cooper from Essex Association of TUCs who will propose the motion **for Trades Union Congress 2025:**

Oppose Disability Benefit Cuts

This conference notes the Labour Government's Spring Statement published 18th March 2025 attacking disability benefits.

This Conference recognises:

- Up to 1.2 million Disabled people will lose between £4,200 and £6,300 a year by 2029-30. Plus, the carers who will lose Carer's Allowance.
- Recent NEF analysis of the impact of the planned cuts shows actually £6.7b would be taken directly out of the pockets of disabled people
- £23 billion benefits and passported entitlements goes unclaimed annually.
- Over half of the 16 million people living in poverty have a disability.
- Attacking PIP will make it even harder for people to meet the extra costs of having a disability including those already in work.

This Conference instructs the TUC to campaign to oppose the attacks on disability benefits to demand:

- A fully resourced, supportive social security system.
- Opposition to government scapegoating of claimants and shift the focus onto employment rights and tackling employers' discrimination, low pay and poor working conditions as set out in the TUC Welfare Charter.
- Full support for young people's right to access disability benefits.
- Removal of assessments from fat-cat providers and return to public sector delivery in the DWP with a complete overhaul to support claimants.
- Opposition to Government plans to make entitlement to the health component of UC totally dependent on the award of PIP removing the specific support which addresses the impact of disability on being able to work.
- Opposition to the 4 points requirement for PIP which will slash entitlement for new claimants and at the review stage.
- A completely voluntary approach for disabled claimants to access fully staffed support to find work.
- A halt to target-driven approach in DWP and put the emphasis on getting a quality decision right at the outset to reduce the hardship and lengthy time taken to dispute and appeal decisions.
- Investment in public services including the NHS, social care and crisis services to alleviate the impact of poverty and highlight how the disability benefit cuts will increase pressure on these vital services.
- To build support for the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee to organise a demonstration and lobby of Parliament in support of these demands and for the TUC to organise a weekend demonstration against Labour austerity as a launchpad for sustained trade union action in defence of workers and young people.