

MANCHESTER TRADES UNION COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE – *for immediate release*

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“DEFEND PUBLIC SERVICES” SAYS MANCHESTER TRADES COUNCIL AS TUC COMES BACK TO ITS ROOTS

The TUC returns to its Manchester birthplace for this year’s Congress and the key fringe meeting is being organised by the city’s Trades Union Council.

“Defend Public Services...Prevent Privatisation” will take place on Tuesday, 14th September, at the Friends’ Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester. It will begin at 5.30pm after the close of Congress business.

Sara Livesey, Vice-President of Manchester Trades Union Council, said: “This year, the trades Union Congress comes home to Manchester. We are proud to have organised a fringe meeting to debate and decide what can be done about the massive cuts and wholesale privatisation of public services.

“This meeting is designed to promote unity between TUC delegates, trade unionists in the North West, trade union councils and indeed anyone who wants to defend public services.

“Trades councils exist in many different towns and cities up and down the country. they bring together trade unionists from different unions to organise at a community level.”

Speakers at the Trades Council’s fringe meeting will be:

Christine Blower, General Secretary NUT

Billy Hayes, General Secretary CWU

Mark Serwotka, General Secretary PCS

Matt Wrack, General Secretary FBU

Following the Tory/Lib Dem coalition’s first budget, it is clear that cuts and hard times are going to be ahead for local councils, public sector workers and the poor and vulnerable in the UK

Christine Blower, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers said:

“This Government’s ideological attack on state education has to be opposed. Legislation to create many more academies and the new so called “free schools” is an attack on the very existence of free, state comprehensive education which is democratically accountable. It is privatisation on a grand scale and is unacceptable.

The combination of this privatisation and the cuts to come will leave schools with larger classes and teachers with deep concerns about how they can provide a high quality of educational experience to all the children they teach.

We must work across the trade union movement and with parents and Governors to make sure that all children have access to a good local school for every child. Education cuts never heal and will leave many children without access to the education which can help to bring greater social justice to our society.”

Billy Hayes, General Secretary of the Communication Workers Union said:

“The CWU has secured an agreement to modernise Royal Mail in the public sector over a three year period. But the Coalition government wants to assert dogma over the needs of the industry and consumer - hence their proposals for privatisation. We will campaign alongside other unions to prevent the destruction of public services.”

Mark Serwotka, General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union said:

“Many PCS members have already suffered pay cuts and below inflation increases, and are now facing the prospect of a pay freeze.

Coupled with massive job cuts and the likely attack on pensions in the autumn, civil and public servants are facing an uncertain future while they strive to maintain the level of services they provide to some of the most vulnerable people in society.

We are committed to supporting the work of local trades councils, like the one in Manchester, and playing an active part in the fightback against this government's plans to unpick the welfare state piece by piece."

Matt Wrack, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union said:

"Our members experienced the results of cuts in local government budgets under the last Government.

Up and down the country we saw fire services cut the numbers of fire fighters, close stations and reduce emergency cover. All this puts safety at risk.

We are facing a horrendous attack on our public services as this government attempts to make working people pay for the economic crisis. We need to build an alliance of trade unions, campaign groups and local communities which creates an unstoppable movement to defeat these attacks. "

These quotes from General Council members speaking at the fringe meeting at TUC Congress in Manchester show the change in political atmosphere that has occurred since the General Election. TUC delegates will be discussing motions focusing on the impact of public sector spending cuts on jobs, pay and services. Pressure will be placed on the TUC General Council and General Secretary Brendan Barber to show his support and make a stand.

For further information about the meeting or to book a slot to interview the speakers before the start, contact Sara Livesey Vice President Manchester Trades Council please telephone Home 0161 224 1671 Mobile 07714 337 402