

## **NAPO AGM 5 & 6 OCTOBER 2018 - SOUTHPORT**

### **General Secretary's Speech - Saturday morning, 6 October 2018**

#### **Ian Lawrence said:**

“It's been a 12 months that have brought a number of developments, some as usual are of the less than happy kind but others give us real optimism that we are seeing the political tide turn in our favour just a little bit and not before time either. Firstly, I want to extend Conferences appreciation to the Napo HQ team for their tremendous efforts in keeping our ship very much afloat.

Among the personal highlights for me has been the privilege of giving evidence again to the Justice Select Committee, winning another term as your General Secretary (and thanks to all those here and elsewhere who helped make that possible) and being elected to the TUC General Council. On the family side the arrival of Grandchild number 9 Edward Wilkinson means I can forget the notion of having totally uneventful weekends in years to come.

So let us get down to business....

On Thursday, I had the privilege of attending at the FCS AGM and I want to reaffirm my commitment that the issues debated there will be treated with as much importance as those pertaining to our members in all the employers where Napo is represented. I listened and noted what our FCs members were saying Thursday about communications with members, the required work on their recruitment campaign, the interaction with their brothers and sisters in probation, the future of their Family Court Journal, and the plans to engage senior management on some disturbing trends in grievance and capability proceedings which appear to be disproportionately targeting staff from the BAME Community.

Looking across to our members in Probation Northern Ireland as Yvonne said yesterday, they still face significant challenges. Stormont is still inactive and the antics of one of the main parties in propping up the Tories over here are having a deleterious impact on the need for self-governance and its time certain people woke up to that fact.

We have had more than our fair share of important professional issues to deal with among them being ViSOR and the disgraceful and disgracefully inept outsourcing of the AP DWNC contracts. On ViSOR we have listened carefully to yesterday's debate and your message to protect members' employment rights have been loudly and clearly received. We are in dispute here, because the employer has refused to take our solutions onboard. Unfortunately we have exhausted our enquiries on the legal options are while we have not ruled out IA, that is a route which will have to be carefully considered and whereas always I will be guided by our members.

So ... is it too much to ask that senior NPS leaders stop wringing their hands and accept the notion that it should be ok to fail the vetting and not for that to stigmatise staff and put a blight on peoples career. In other words, NPS leaders should be batting for your team just a little bit harder.

Then there has been the at times comical situation around hard pressed and already stressed out staff having to find and re-present their professional qualifications; with all the evidence suggesting that another consequence of TR was the loss of personal information. Happily, some progress has been made here at last and the NPS have belatedly offered to provide practical support.

Another issue, which is certainly no laughing matter, is the increase in SFO representations. This has included dealing with the aftermath of the Panorama documentary and the fact that there is now obvious Ministerial interest in these cases and growing evidence that those in charge of a probation service ripped asunder by disastrous political decisions now want to point the finger of blame on staff to demonstrate to victims' families that 'something is being done'. Well, we have picked up and run with the Emergency Motion from last year's AGM and have vigorously and quite successfully defended our members in a number of cases which have been handled by Tania Bassett and some of our National Reps.

However, as we all know, the blame for the Crisis in Probation rests not just with that serial failure Chris Grayling but all those who told him that it was safe to divide an award winning public service. People such as Michael Spurr (Bon Voyage), Ian Porree, Antonia Romeo, and others who provided testimony that TR would have no discernible impact on Community safety. Right! .... Safe then; as in the statistic I received from Granada TV of 67 SFO's involving Murder from 2016 onwards where the perpetrators were on Licence or under probation supervision. SAFE as in the same source who told me at the time that Greater Manchester Police currently have 26 murder investigations ongoing of which 17 are DV related.

Safe to privatise Probation because you blatantly ignored your own risk assessment that told you that there would be a likely increase in SFO's. You lot said it was safe and you lied, and in Napo's view it should not be just Failing Grayling who is called to account but all those who signed up like lemmings to his plans. In short, and hear this loud and clear, people are dying because of privatisation.

So I will say this to anyone in HMPPS, the MoJ and high political office who thinks its expedient to look for scapegoats, we are on to you, we know what you are about and Napo simply will not stand for it, and we will expose your actions to Parliament and the media at each and every opportunity.

Conference, we gather here in what is undoubtedly the most critical Socio-economic situation that this nation has faced since the Second World War.

I'm talking about BREXIT, a crisis which is wholly reflective of the great divide that followed that fateful referendum.

The plotting within the Tory party is it seems the biggest show in town, while the threat to the jobs of thousands of working people following the miseries visited upon us by this government such as Austerity, universal credits, a failing NHS, foodbanks and a huge increase in homelessness especially amongst young people are still a reality, no matter what you have been told this week.

In addition, what did we hear from that tory party conference? 'Coping with BREXIT IS just about unity and pulling together' Unity... from the most divisive, reactionary government in living memory which at times make makes Margaret Thatcher look like a closet Corbynista, Unity from a government who has sought to privatise everything and shows no sign of relenting, and with it the prospect of being led by the likes of that visibly amiable but diversity challenged nincompoop Boris Johnson (btw funny how the Tories bray about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party but take months to investigate allegations of islamophobia in their own senior circles). Or Jacob Rees Mogg who, unlike the characters in those time travel TV series, is the odd one out in that he somehow found a way to get himself projected forwards from 300 years ago!

Look, whether you voted in or out is not the point it is about where are now and who we have entrusted to finalise the negotiations with Europe, such as the likes of Dominic Raab, whose antipathy to working people has been well-documented quotes such as:

“British workers are among the worst idlers in the world”

“We need to scrap the obstacle of the working time directive”

Nice...sounds like a bloke we can trust to do the right thing. For this agenda to consign your employment rights to the BREXIT Bonfire is one of the reasons why Yvonne and I with the authority of your NEC supported the TUC statement on Brexit which essentially identified some time ago what we now know to be the likely outcome of the negotiations with the EU, namely an exit package won't pass muster within the ranks of the Government, or parliament or indeed the EU itself, or worse still, the disastrous 'prospect of a no deal BREXIT

So the message from trade unionists everywhere to this government ought to be that if you can't look after the interests of working people, their jobs and employment rights, their families and the generations that will follow us, then call a general election now and let the people have the choice of putting in place a government who will!

Turning to our diversity agenda. As we know the Post Brexit, referendum world is a toxic environment, further sullied by the encouragement it has given to right wing politicians and extremist groups across Europe

On 9 June this year, a 15,000 strong violent far right 'free speech' rally took place in central London, with fascist and ex EDL leader Tommy Robinson.

This scale of mobilisation by the far right, with fascists operating at its heart, is unprecedented in recent years and we have heard about the assault on the RMT delegation following the Stand Up To Racism/Unite Against Fascism counter demo against Robinson's supporters on 14 July, and then a fascist attack on the TUC's official bookshop Bookmarks.

This emergent far right street movement is characterised by its aggressive Islamophobia—expressed through the laughably named if it was not so serious Football Lads Alliance and the 'Democratic Football Lads' Alliance'

Operating under a so called anti extremist banner as they besmirch the England flag and whose racist behaviour and bile does not exactly match up to its mantra.

Mainstream politicians from Trump to Boris Johnson have made repeated interventions that normalise Islamophobic racist scapegoating. This provides oxygen to the fascist and far right forces. UKIP leader Gerard Batten is now talking of Robinson joining UKIP and standing as an MP. What a disgraceful and sinister scenario.

Redolent is it not of the 1930s when people laughed at so-called tin pot racists and look where it led? This year I had the privilege to visit Auschwitz, as I know many of you have too, and pay homage to the millions of victims of all races who lost their lives under Nazi oppression. Perhaps those moronic thugs who think that racism is good for the soul should also pay a visit to such places where the lives and souls of millions were so brutally destroyed.

If we don't heed the lessons of history, we are doomed to repeat them.

So its time that we take inspiration from those who went before us such as those brave sister and brother trade unionists who faced down fascism on the streets of east London in the 30's, its time the trade union movement made a concerted stand against this sinister movement and for our part I will be publicising a range of upcoming events being organised by Stand up to Racism, Show Racism the Red Card and the TUC. Including the 17 November national unity demonstration against fascism and racism, and their international conference on 20th October.

I hope as many of our members will support these and other initiatives as well as the "Wear Red Day" on 19th October

Our work in the field of diversity includes our continued support and interaction with Paladin in their anti-DV and anti-stalking campaigns and how massively relevant they are in light of the frightening statistics unearthed by Dame Glenys Stacey's team on the failure (just one of many of course) of the CRC providers in managing DV interventions and programmes. And we are engaging with the HMPPS leads on the Lammy Review, which you discussed yesterday and heard what was a brilliant debate, as they seek to implement the many important recommendations that are pertinent to our members and service users.

And the important work of Women in Napo (WIN) continues to go from strength to strength as we seek to increase engagement and participation and open up future leadership opportunities.

And something new in terms of the diversity agenda in the form of campaigns to achieve electoral reform and I am pleased to welcome Jake from MVM who you have hopefully visited already.

I personally hope their visit will lead to a debate within Napo that may see this union having a policy on Electoral reform, but that decision ultimately rests with you, and MVM will be pleased to engage with you and speak at your Branch meeting if invited.

Now moving to the issue of Napo's future... and why it is vital that we think and act strategically

That is why we have the S4G and the plans to launch our bespoke training package for reps in the autumn and I heard the debate on Motion 35. And let me be clear; Branches are in integral and irreplaceable part of this union. There is no plan to override our loyal activists and you must and will be part of initiatives such as this. We'll work with you to help find and develop Napo's leaders of the future.

So strategic thinking, on new improved member engagement and as you saw from our new partners APT a new MEMBER FOCUSSED ICT system, revamped communications from the Napo team which are among the best that I have seen anywhere across the movement, no mean feat given our size and resources

And new approaches such as the Napo members handbook of which we have boxes ready to go to new members. Because it's a straightforward choice, we grow or we perish: for its time, on the back of the change in the TR climate and the NPS pay offer to lift our heads up again, gain self-inspiration from the fact that despair is hurtful but a loss of hope is terminal, and making a real collective choice to stand up for our beliefs our values our skills and our product.

Now finally for the two big ticket issues on our huge agenda THE STATE OF THE PROBATION SERVICE AND OUR REUNIFICATION CAMPAIGN and the NPS pay Offer, and each has inextricable links to the other



The debate on Comp A was inspirational yesterday and saves me rehearsing it again, but we also need a big debate at some stage on the crisis in our prisons and the struggles of our comrades from the POA, who I am delighted, are represented here by Mark Fairhurst. So let me spend the last couple of minutes setting out our approach to the long awaited NPS pay offer and I hope last night's briefing will be of benefit to our reps in the upcoming member meetings.

THE PROPOSED DEAL TICKS A NUMBER OF OUR BOXES, progression to the max in 3-6 years instead of 25; a minimum of 6% over two years, with significant increases for those mid pay band now, and again in April on further progression, and for the first time in 10 years achieving headroom for those at their pay band maxima., all of this absent any performance pay

No it does not give us all that we wanted and yes, there will be some challenges going forward but it gives us back some dignity. And don't forget those non-members who complain about pay, that Napo has secured the money in their pay packets and if they want to vote then join Napo today. And we are confident about this offer and won't sit on fences. So, the next challenge if it is accepted in the ballot (that's a ground breaking electronic ballot) is how we turn our focus and campaigning energy on the CRC providers in 2018 and beyond

There is no indication from anywhere right now that CRCs will have any expectation to follow suit. So Napo will now fully engage in a pay campaign with the CRC's. That campaign will comprise national and local activity and will require input from Napo and our CRC members. Napo is committed to ensuring that the service is reunified and a unified pay claim is essential to meeting this long-term objective.

Nationally, Napo will press the Ministers to provide further funding over the life of the current CRC contracts to ensure that funds are made available to achieve pay parity. Napo will also insist (notwithstanding our opposition to Mr Gauke's sham consultation) that any future bids should include this pay offer and pay reform process to ensure that all probation staff are fairly and equally rewarded for their hard work.

Because we never started the pay war between NPS and CRCs, but we'll use every tactic to try and win it! Because there will be many CRC staff already looking enviously at the NPS pay offer and who might, despite the loss of continuity, decide that NPS vacancies up the stairs or down the road look an attractive option. And we'll work closely with the Labour Front Bench and Lord Ramsbotham's Review to promote our campaigns and to advise and influence future policy. This is essential as part of our reunification campaign, and as you know Labour have fully committed to rescind the CRC contracts once they form a new Government, and that cannot come a day too soon.

And I will be personally writing to Bob Neil and the Justice Select Committee to update them on the current situation and to state our case for a unified probation service that works for communities, service users and for staff.

Locally

Your Officials will work closely with heads of CRCs and that won't be easy to discuss and get feedback on the NPS pay offer to establish where each organization is at in relation to future pay.

Napo will offer to work with the CRC's to lobby the Ministry of Justice to ensure that CRC's are given the funds to match this pay offer... and

Branches and individual members will be asked to write to their MP's to update them on the current pay situation and to promote Napo's campaign to reunify the probation service and implement pay parity, and we need your full involvement.

But If CRC's are not willing to engage or fail to obtain the required funds, Napo will work closely with branches to look at our options and if that involves the potential for industrial action then we will seriously explore this in partnership with Reps and members.

So let me be very clear to CRC owners, Napo has an agenda that says work with us over the next two years before your contracts are terminated to pay your staff appropriately; treat them with respect and dignity and give yourselves a fighting chance that if new CRC contracts are awarded then you can show that you tried to atone for your many sins.

For we will not baulk in exposing the corruption, the lies, and the political stitch up being planned by Mr Gauke and Co, who seem to live in some fantasy land and who simply ignore the calamity that has occurred this past 4 years as if it had never happened, and simply rebadge privatisation into a new 10 region structure where Ministers and their lackeys can cosy up to the existing providers and simply hand them a new deal.

Because these ministers just like their predecessors have failed to bat for your staff, failed to recognise the wealth of talent at your disposal at the start of your dreadful TR experiment before you presided over a staggering average 40% reduction in staffing. And get this, if you can remove offender management work from the dreadful and corrupt Working Links CRC, you can do it in England as well and you should be saying to that provider: just drop the keys off please at 102 Petty France.

So, as we leave Southport later we can do so with a little spring in our step for the first time in a long time, for our members have faced living hell these last four years, but have stuck in there and are just as determined now as we were four years ago to be in the vanguard of that fightback to see the profession reunified, regorganised and returned to public control and ownership.

Those CRC providers who don't like that prospect have a clear choice, and that's to go back from whence you came, take your failures, your legacy of misery and incompetence, your disrespect for staff and service users, your culpability in a number of SFO's and your broken reputations if you ever had one in the first place and shove off!

Brothers and sisters I am very proud and humbled to be able to help lead us forward over the next five years and work with you all in the challenges ahead. They will test us for sure but I know that ultimately we will celebrate the ultimate victory.

Thank you and have safe journeys home to your families.