

Composite Motion 14 – Public Spending

Conference notes that workers are bearing the brunt of a broken economic model with media reports, on August 14th, 2025, showing that UK growth has slowed to 0.3%. Yet, since July 2021, energy prices have surged 30% more than wages. On August 27, 2025, Ofgem announced a 2% increase in the energy price cap, raising the typical household's annual energy bill to £1,755.

The British public already pays some of the highest energy prices in Europe. Over the past five years, household bills have soared by over £700, with more than 6 million people now living in fuel poverty.

A combination of slow growth, price rises, low wages and enormous pressure on public services has pushed Britain to breaking point.

The ultra-wealthy, overseas investors and energy giants are reaping the benefits of a broken economic model, posting record profits and distributing billions to shareholders, while working-class people, especially the disabled and elderly, face rising bills, flatlining wages, and diminishing public services.

Such economic inequality is only exacerbated by the insecure, fragmented model of employment that has become commonplace in our society, with the most vulnerable being the most affected.

The economy's sluggish recovery is directly linked to the world of work becoming more exploitative and insecure. This is not accidental—it's the result of a rigged economy that rewards wealth, not workers.

Meanwhile, energy giants record excess profits and shareholders pocket billions. Inflation may be falling, but prices remain high and rising, especially for energy, pushing more working people to the brink.

This cannot be right and will only fan the flames of support for Reform and Nigel Farage. Conference is therefore alarmed by calls, reported in the media on 3 September, to cut public spending further.

Conference notes that the Spending Review already imposed reductions across Government departments. For example, it failed to provide the sustained investment the fire and rescue service needs to tackle risks today and in the future; the central funding for 2025-26 was only 1.4%, regrettably below the rate of inflation.

Conference notes the devastating wildfires over August 2025. Wildfires in Dorset saw firefighters from seventeen fire and rescue services, from as far away as

Merseyside provide support to local crews. Similarly, firefighters from London attended fires in North Yorkshire.

Conference further notes that fire and rescue services across the UK are stretched beyond breaking point, after 14 years of damage inflicted by Conservative-led governments. One-in-five firefighter jobs have been cut since 2010 and 80 fire stations have closed.

Conference believes this is unsustainable and puts firefighters and the public at risk.

Conference further believes that the previous Tory Government's cuts and privatisation agenda are a false economy leading to low growth, stagnating wages, eroded conditions, and crumbling public services, and represents a failed economic model.

Conference notes that it also produced record low levels of the investment needed to boost growth, fix our crumbling infrastructure, and create good, unionised jobs – while private profits and inequality soared.

Therefore, Conference strongly supports the Government's plans to bring Train Operating Companies into public ownership, which could provide a broader example for tackling profiteering and low levels of investment to deliver for service users.

However, Conference believes that cuts undermine both this agenda and the Government's plan to Make Work Pay, as they have prompted unnamed Government sources to float significant job losses in the transition to public ownership of the Train Operating Companies, which Conference strongly opposes.

Instead, public ownership in any sector is the opportunity to level-up pay and conditions for workers. Reversing Tory cuts and creating – not cutting – good, unionised jobs must be at the centre of Government economic strategy.

Conference therefore believes that a fairer system of progressive taxation, including a tax on extreme wealth, is needed to invest in our vital public services and ensure frontline workers have the resources they need. With tech giants making windfall profits and billionaires expanding their empires, there can be no justification for welfare cuts or a race to the bottom on jobs.

Enough is enough. This cost-of-living crisis is a political choice.

We must embed collective rights and sectoral bargaining across our economy, if we are to achieve growth and better living standards for all.

There is a clear way to restructure our economy. The Government must act decisively to rebalance the economy in favour of workers.

Conference therefore calls on the Government to –

1. Reverse Tory cuts and austerity.
2. Commit to ensuring that any gaps in public expenditure are remedied through a system of progressive taxation where the wealthy pay their fair share, introducing a wealth tax on the richest to raise revenue for public services and support struggling households.
3. Scrap the October 1st energy price rise to save households £31 per year; freeze the energy price cap for at least 12 months to prevent further hardship; and extend and toughen the windfall tax on energy giants to fund this freeze.
4. Increase public investment to fix our crumbling infrastructure, boost growth and productivity, and create – not cut – good, unionised jobs.
5. Provide sustained investment in the fire and rescue service; an immediate increase of 5,000 firefighters with a review to examine further expansion; and decent, sustained pay rises for firefighters and good conditions of work.
6. Commit to expanding collective rights and sectoral bargaining to boost growth and security for working people.

Mover: UNITE
Seconder: CWU