TUC INTERVIEWS
DAVID LEA
We're in the Ernest Bevin room at the TUC, at the Headquarters, Congress House, of Britain's Trade Union movement. Behind me is the bust of Ernest Bevan, one-time General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, wartime minister of Labour in Churchill's government, foreign secretary in the Atlee government of 1945, this is the citadel of the Trade Union movement. I'm going to talk to David Lea who has been here for 35 years, came in as an economic secretary and then rose to Assistant General Secretary, who will be retiring soon. David Lea has seen enormous changes here at Congress House.
In those days, of course, I but the point was after - because I was thrown at the deep end in on Donovan - I mean I was at that age doing far more interesting work than I would have been even if I had at some point become a back-bench Member of Parliament.

Indeed was he against people using the TUC as a stepping stone?

Very heavily, very heavily because the, you know things have changed now but his very strong perception was about the need for the TUC to be autonomous from the Labour Party as such even though he was a very pro NEC, pro what we'd now call social dialogue, social partnership, but of course there was this ambiguity of how can you do that without having an incestuous relationship with the Labour Party, leaving aside affiliation questions when the CBI arguably was equally in bed with the Conservative Party and so the whole Catch-22 went on. But I mean he was, we all know,

So George wouldn't have liked Peter Mandelson or John Healey or -

He wouldn't have liked Peter Mandelson a bit -

No he wouldn't have liked Mandelson that's for sure.

Incidentally I'm surprised he didn't ask you apart from have you any intentions of becoming a Member of Parliament, do you intend to grow a beard? Because you know George didn't like beards and he sacked one figure whom I shall mention in a minute - because one day he came down, do you know the story about this?

I'll tell you another story in a very similar vein. And it was either Woodcock or Vincent Tewson that Bernard Dix,

That's right. It was Bernard Dix.

And I think it was Tewson but may have been Woodcock coming up in the lift one day and for some reason, not because he had pressed the wrong button but for some reason instead of coming to 4th floor, the lift door opened at the 2nd floor. You know, a lift door opens and then shuts again. And in that time, Bernard Dicks just walked by wearing a cravat and sort of, not a cravat as in just tied like that but a

cravat tied like, you know, Wild West sort of, □going barn dancing Mr Dix?□ he said. And then the door shut and that was the end of the anecdote.

David, will you tell us something about your early background? I know you come from Lancashire and I think your father was a teacher, wasn't he? Can you tell us something about your family background and your early days?

Well, I have a very strong Lancashire background but I have to say we moved from Lancashire to Nottingham when I was 18 months old, just before the outbreak of war. But the relevance of having that Lancashire background is that when we subsequently moved to the South of England, I was very conscious of the North West to South aspect and the very different outlook in, on the Surrey Hampshire border where we ultimately moved to than even Nottingham or Lancashire. And of course when you start supporting Bolton Wanderers and the Lancashire cricket team, it tends to stay with you. So I, I think that's one of the factors in my outlook but there are other factors as well which we'll no doubt will come on to.

So you say you left Lancashire when you were a small child, 18 months old when you went to Nottingham. Was your father a teacher?

Yes. He began life in the mining industry but he went to teacher training college at Chester, I think, in the early '30s and then he ultimately became headmaster of a infant junior school near Nottingham and then to another junior school in Hampshire near the Surrey border. So we moved in 1949 to Farnham on the Surrey-Hampshire border. So that's really why I've got a mixture of my upbringing of the North and the South.

Where did you go to school, David?

Well, I went to school at Farnham Grammar School essentially after moving South and passing the 11+. And I'd like to tell you one sequel to that. In about the year 1950, '51, when I'd been already one year at Farnham Grammar School, the headmaster said I need to have a word with you because you were apparently top in the 11+ in Surrey and therefore you're entitled to a free scholarship place at Charterhouse, and congratulations and so on. And I said I'm not going to Charterhouse. I'm not going to a public school. And he said, well you'll have to discuss with your parents but why are you so against going to a public school? And I said, well I don't like people that go to public schools. So where I got all that from one can speculate about but it was very much by then ingrained in my outlook that there were, as it were, there was discrimination or there were sheep and goats between those people who went to public schools and those people that didn't. And I had a strong reaction to that.

And, of course, you started school in Nottingham I presume.

Yes. I first started school at the age of five in my father's school and then that proved a bit unsatisfactory and I went to another school nearer Nottingham than the village of Collick where I was. And then, as I say, I went briefly to a junior school in

Farnham where I passed the 11+. And then the rest of the time, Farnham Grammar School before ultimately I'd done national service and went to Cambridge.

Were you aware at that time, even at that young age, of the social ambience, the difference, say, between Nottingham and Farnham.

Oh well, I think it's part of this same anecdote about the public schools. I mean when I was at Farnham Grammar School, my best friend left school at the earliest school-leaving age and he was brighter than I was but he couldn't stay on at school because his parents couldn't afford to keep him. And, of course, one is very conscious of that sort of example.

And then you went to Cambridge with a scholarship, didn't you?

Yes. I did economics. In those days there was a big debate going on, which is a recurrent debate in this country, the two cultures. Remember C P Snow wrote the book. Or C P Sleet, as we used to call him. About the two cultures. And then when I was in the army, my senior tutor at Christ College wrote and asked would I be a guinea pig to do one extra year at Cambridge to do a transfer bursary to do Science. I'd done Arts at school and they wanted me to do Arts and Science together. And so I did Maths, Physics and Chemistry. And then you were offered the chance of going on with the Science side at Cambridge or it was true of about, about half of us, there was half a dozen of us on this bursary, to go on with the subject you had originally intentionally intended to go on with, in my case Economics.

At that time, what did you talk about? It was the post war years but what did particular year are we talking about were you at Cambridge?

I was '55-'57 in the Army, two years, and then I went to Cambridge in October '57.

So were talking about only ten years after the war when most of the universities, certainly Oxford and Cambridge were taking their entrants from public schools.

It's still very much the case in Cambridge if I might say. It hasn't changed very, very much. It was 50/50. I mean it hasn't changed an awful lot now. But yes, the, there was also a very big number from Manchester Grammar School - a direct grant school and so you have three categories because I wouldn't put them in quite the category as Winchester, etc. And there was a North-South aspect to that as well.

So were you already becoming politically aware that there were class divisions in society?

Indeed, I was a political animal. I'll put it more generally. I was certainly political animal. As I say, I wrote an essay at school for the English essay prize. And you were allowed to choose your own subject and I wrote this essay and I thought it was quite good. And when they announced the prizes I was nowhere, and I asked the English master did he not think my essay had any value. And he said it was ruled out of order. I said, well why was that? And he said well the subject was ruled out of

order. Well, I said, how was that? Because there wasn't any restrictions on the subjects as I remember. And he said it was ruled out of order. Anyway, I had written this essay, at about age 13, and the question was 'Is Stalinism Communism?' question mark. And he said that was a totally inappropriate subject.

Why? What was so horrific about that, you taking that subject? Was it a reflection already of,

Well, it was rather like you don't talk about sex, politics or religion in a pub, isn't it? It was just not acceptable.

But you were already a political animal. You were already involved in political, in activities in Cambridge.

Oh yes, yes. I became the first, I was in the inaugural chair, I was President of my JCR junior common room at Christ College and I invited all the presidents of the junior common rooms to a meeting and suggested we established a Cambridge University students' representative council, which is going to this day, I became an inaugural chair of it in 1961. And that was, I came to Trade Unionism in the sense that we had this big negotiation about whether you had to wear a gown to go to the University library. I think that was my greatest achievement.

So when did you join the TUC? Direct from Cambridge?

No. I had three years at the Economist Intelligence Unit and I did a couple of very interesting jobs abroad, one in Sierra Leone in West Africa and one in Uganda in East Africa. And, of course, you fall in love with Africa if you work in Africa for any length of time. Sierra Leone, the climate in every sense is much more difficult than Uganda but Uganda in those days, just at the end of the British protectorate, was an absolutely gorgeous country. There had been the question about the □ and the Northern people but in the hand-over period we had a very, very good technical British assistance programme. I was involved in roads and transport and looking at better facilities for getting fish without it being smoked from Western Uganda, the lakes region into Kampala and down to how to improve the living standards in the South West area opposite Rwanda and Tanzania. So it had an indelible effect on me.

So three years in Africa,

Well, not all the time in Africa. But I mean the two spells of four months or whatever. And I also did other jobs around Britain. In those days one was writing chunks of material about the economy and about the aspects of Africa or about the transport industry. And eventually, and what connects that with me coming to the TUC, I was doing post graduate work at LSE on transport economics and that ultimately is why I joined the TUC in the sense of the peg to hang the story on is that the TUC was going to do a review of transport policy, in 1963, I think, and I rang up Len Murray and invited him out to lunch. And I'll just tell you an anecdote about that. I came along here, had lunch with Len Murray and he said, ultimately he said are you trying to come and have a job here? And I said yes, I think that's why I'm here. He said,

OK he said, but you'll need to be interviewed by George Woodcock and he's a bit shy and what you'll have to bear in mind is that he's very much against anybody joining the TUC if they've got any aspiration to become a Member of Parliament. So he'll only ask you one question. He'll say, Mr Lea, have you any aspiration to become a Member of Parliament? And the answer to that is no Mr Woodcock. And I said, well yeah, I think that I can remember that. So I came in this next room here and I sat down for a few moments. And eventually Woodcock looking at the floor coughed and spluttered and said, Mr Lea, I've read your form. Have you any aspiration to become a Member of Parliament? And my brain froze and I couldn't remember the answer. And Len Murray was sitting over there going sort of like that and I said oh no Mr Woodcock. And he said, that's all right then. And that's how I got a job here.

Why did Woodcock ask you that?

George Woodcock had a very strong view about trade union autonomy. Now, of course, it's an endlessly complex question, the TUC and the Labour Party, he had no illusions that the majority of our unions voted for the Labour Party, and here we are in 1999, exactly 100 years ago since the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants' branch in Doncaster put down a motion, at their annual conference, that they put down the motion at the 1900 TUC about there being established a Labour representation committee. And one can't look at the century without realising that had an enormously big effect. And moreover, not only was it a technical point but for many of those years, it was the trade union connection, an umbilical connection, which gave the stability to the Labour Party rather than what you might call just the socialist utopian or other political element per se. Now George Woodcock knew all about that but on the other hand, and hence the Barbara Castle dilemma, which we'll no doubt come to, he always felt very strongly that we were not somehow a branch of the Labour movement. But many other people would put the point the other way round. How can we be part of the Labour movement whilst having a degree of autonomy. And he felt, I think there's an analogy here with Brussels and Jacques Delors - unless there is subsidiarity and a degree of autonomy for the social partners, we have the dilemma that everything somehow becomes a branch of state activity. And he felt that the social partners were not part of state activity although one could have national level framework agreements and collective bargaining at a higher level as Lawrence Daly once put it in the social contract incomes policy days, Woodcock was very clear about that and very strongly in favour in '62 with Harold Macmillan of setting up a national economic development council and so on. So it was a very, very big question as you know.

You came into the TUC in '64 after,

January '64.

The party had been out of power, the Labour Party had been out of power for 13 years. What was the climate and in particular the relationship between the TUC and Labour?

Well, there was some confidence but some apprehension. On the question of NEDC I think some people in the Labour Party were a bit nervous about the enthusiasm of the TUC for the NEDC because it meant that the TUC and the CBI were an independent factor to be taken into consideration, and I remember Peter Shaw was their representative on the TUC economics committee and I was the TUC representative on the Labour Party home policy committee. And we had this discussion about what would happen when they set up the Department of Economic Affairs under George Brown, and would they move the main secretariat out of the independent Mill Bank Tower sort of environment into the DEA. And we went along with the George Brown approach but there were some sensitivities on both sides about that.

This was the National Economic Development Council, a tripartite organisation, set up to -

Half of which was then moved into the Department of Economic Affairs under George Brown, yes.

Set up by Harold Macmillan.

Yes. Selwyn Lloyd, Harold Macmillan, I think in '61, '62. If I've got it right. And, of course, very much continued strongly. The chairmanship varied under Labour between, I think I'm right in saying this, mainly George Brown but occasionally, and this then goes into later periods under the Conservatives. Sometimes it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer and from time to time the Prime Minister would take the chair.

So these were years of a very close link between the TUC and the Labour Party, but also the Conservative Party which was not hostile towards trade unions.

You see, George Woodcock had the strategic grasp that not too many people had that if we were going to be able to develop a stable context for trade unionism in terms of the statutory framework, we had to have some modus operandi? with the Conservative Party in the long run as well as with the Labour Party. Now that cuts both ways. I think that the CBI always had pressures within them. I think it's true at the present time. It always had pressures within them not to somehow dump the Conservative Party just as we have converse pressures, although, of course, I mean our umbilical link over many, many years with the Labour Party, to some extent, isn't totally analogous with the CBI and the Conservative Party. Nevertheless, I think that Woodcock was keen that we had a long term settlement, a long term consensus and the what we now call in Brussels speak, the social dialogue, social partners, social dimension and so on, would manifest itself in the machinery which would be true in principle, whether it was a Conservative government or a Labour government.

Let me take you back to October 1964. You'd just joined the TUC. The Wilson government comes in, a small majority, after 13 years of Tory rule, and one of the first things that happened then was the dialogue with the TUC, George

Brown at the DEA, Callaghan was Chancellor. The dialogue with the TUC, with George Woodcock was the General Secretary, starting what was then, I think, called the declaration of intent at the end of 1964. Were you involved in those talks?

Oh yes. Len Murray was a head of the department and I was certainly involved in writing papers. And, as you say, the voluntary declaration was signed in December '64, but very, very quickly. We had to make this decision. Hence the very difficult talks and George Brown came to Brighton I remember when we had the statutory policy and we reluctantly went along with that. But that opened a can of worms obviously. It was very difficult in a labour market with full employment without, as it were, knowing how you going to get the structural mobility in the labour market to put the lid on the pressure cooker in terms of pay. But that was a dilemma which, it's quite remarkable how it's gone away as we sit here now. Whether it has really gone away, well, it's just that we've got a high level of unemployment which a moot point.

What were the problems with let's call it incomes policy which was part, an essential part of the declaration intent? The trade union movement, remember what had happened in the earlier post war years under Cripps with the wage freeze and the policy that followed. There was a great deal of scepticism as to whether an incomes policy, even with a Labour government, could work.

I think there's an ambiguity in what we're talking about here. And Cripps, I think, illustrates it. The public sector where the government has to have a policy when the government's paying out the money in some sense, is one thing. Saying what should happen in the construction industry or the motor car industry is another thing. Now if you don't do something in the public sector, people will say that you're all over the place, you haven't got a coherent consistent policy. If, however, you have a coherent consistent policy in some sense in the public sector, people in the public sector then say it's discriminatory against the public sector, even though arguably, and this is true of the later period of the Social Contract, even though arguably, you may say the public sector was doing quite well, relatively speaking out of having a pay policy. But there is the ambiguity or the misunderstanding, let me put it that way around about whether this is inherently discriminatory.

That particular period that followed the declaration of intent which began to erode. By 1966 we were in an economic crisis. There had been a second election which Harold Wilson won with a very large majority. And yet, again, in the summer of 1966, we were back into a severe economic policy and the trade union movement again was called on to play a special role with that Labour government. Were you involved in that, in those talks?

Yes. I began to get heavily involved in the economic side about then. I'd just spent a year, more or less, writing evidence to the Donovan Royal Commission which was established by Ray Gunter at the Ministry of Labour in '65. And I wrote this book called 'Trade Unionism'. This was, we'll come back to it, no doubt, a major review of industrial relations. But when I finished that, I was a bit involved in that element of

TUC work, but also I was in the economic department after all and an equally strong focus was the pay question. And in 1968 I wrote the first TUC economic review, which was a vehicle for establishing what should the real wage increase be. A real wage equals, you know, let's say 2% equals productivity or equals productivity plus, add on what you assume is a reasonable allowance for inflation, and that became a pay norm. So that we had to balance, what you might call, the industrial relations pressures with the macro-economic parameters that the government wished to achieve.

Those early years of yours in the 1960s, the TUC were quite dramatic. If you look back at those years, they were absolutely critical for the relationship between the Wilson Labour Government and the TUC. You had the Donovan Commission, which you've mentioned. You had the attempt, yet again, at an income's policy under George Brown. You had the whole problem of an explosion of unofficial strikes, particularly in industries like the motor industry. So those '60s must have been quite dramatic years in your early period at the TUC.

Well, they were very, very difficult in some respects. And the denouement, of course, was after the Donovan Commission reported with consensus, an agreement on the Donovan Commission, which was jointly accepted by the TUC and the CBI in the Summer and Autumn of '68, that there be some reform of effective arguing of procedures essentially in the concept written by Hugh Claig to make the level of collective bargaining correspond more closely to the level at which the shop stewards or the workplace representatives were involved in the private sector that at that time we had an agreement with the CBI to implement this reform, and there were some other reforms about inter-union disputes and about individual right of appeal, where there were disciplinary actions by a union against one of its members and the TUC was involved in the reform there. But despite all of that, and our conferences on action on Donovan, by the Christmas of 1968, Barbara Castle takes it upon herself to, as it were, overturn the main principles of Donovan as we saw it by going for a statutory intervention and that, of course, blew the whole thing up. But that's another story.

I'd like to get into that one, takes it upon her self to go ahead with In Place of Strife. Fill in the background to that.

Well, Barbara, of course, comes from a totally different tradition from some of the Labour leaders who had a long standing knowledge about trade unionism, like Jim Callaghan had been involved, was he not, in the Inland Revenue Staff Federation and so on. Barbara came from, if I may say so, a Bevanite tradition of we must take action through the State to get towards Socialism, and not having a close feel for what you might call the compromise partial achievements of trade unionism through collective agreements. And therefore we, right from the start, and Victor Feather, I remember, took over as acting General Secretary at this period when Woodcock announced his retirement. He had a long standing spat with Barbara Castle because they came from these totally different traditions and he didn't think it was a very good appointment. However, that's history and we got where we got to. But it was symbolic of these two chalk and cheese traditions in the Labour movement.

What did Woodcock think about the change? 'In Place of Strife'? He was in favour of it wasn't he?

I don't know that people are right when they say that. I mean that's part of the version of history written by Barbara Castle, I guess, but it's not part of our version of history. Woodcock, after all, was a member of the Donovan Commission - and not only on those grounds but on overall grounds of everything I've said to you about Woodcock's world view. He would have been in favour of getting on with the recommendations of the Donovan Commission. Any TUC General Secretary, however, has to be involved in meetings, over a cup of coffee no doubt, with the Secretary of State. And I don't know what was said at any one to one private meetings. How would I know? But I know it's been put about by other people that we somehow agreed. I would be very, very surprised because the main committee of the Finance and General were horrified at In Place of Strife.

And in the light of what happened subsequently with Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, do you think you were right or wrong to kill off In Place of Strife?

I think we were right to stand up for the Donovan report. I'm more equivocal about other periods of difficulty with the Labour government such as '79. But I have no doubt at all. I remember when later some current senior ministers in the present government would say, of course, we have to be the government and we have to do what is necessary and we have to support classic strategies of modernisation such as in place of strife. And I and others point out to them that that is a very strange view of history. It wasn't us that tore up the Donovan Commission Report. And also, to put the point the other way around, the TUC has always delivered what we say we would deliver. And it's not because we have aspirations to run the country or have aspirations to be part of a corporate state, which is, of course, a very tendentious expression anyway and Mussolini. This was collective bargaining at higher level. And it's very, very common in continental countries.

And even before the Conversatives came into power in 1970, they were planning legislation, weren't they?

Yes, Ted Heath had this report. And I think Geoffrey Howe was associated with the report - a giant strength. And then they had the Selsdon Conference. I think I've got my chronology right here. Funnily enough, we had an agreement. I don't know whether you have this in your other interviews but we had an agreement with the CBI in the Spring of 1970. Before the election. the disputes procedures agreement with the CBI. And this was supposed to stand us in good stead whoever won the election. But on the election victory, and it was a bigger margin than, you know we were very disappointed by the was in 1970 election result but the CBI immediately, I was going to say, reneged. But put it this way, they said well look a different situation has now come about. And I guess that, was it Pat, who are you talking to on this, I don't know, you can cut this bit out but you're,

Pat Lowry

Have you got Pat Lowry on your list?

Yes.

Oh right. Well I think Pat Lowry may be talking to you about his recollections about TUC-CBI but I think that there is a problem, both with TUC and the CBI, in making robust agreements when the political party which they have the closest relations with gets elected by a substantial majority and feel they are going forward on a certain line. And I'm afraid it is very hard to maintain the credibility of those agreements as Pat Lowry would have told you, I think, about 1970.

And the TUC's relationship with Edward Heath. Describe that.

Well, of course, there was the famous U-turn in '72 but after the problems of industrial restructuring, with the ship builders and so on in 1971, in the Summer of '72 we had this intensive series of talks at Chequers and Downing Street. And we had this report, indeed, it was quite unprecedented called the Chequers and Downing Street talks. We had at least a dozen meetings, both at Chequers and Downing Street, and Ted Heath went a remarkable distance. I remember it got quite relaxed, the atmosphere. I'll tell you an anecdote about that - one day about five o'clock we had drinks in the big lounge at Chequers and I was sitting next Hughie Scanlon on the sofa. And there was some piano music playing. And Hughie whispers to me, do you know what this piece of music is? And I said, yes, it's Schubert's Last Piano Sonata not realising that Ted Heath was standing there with a tray with two gin and tonics on it. And he said I didn't know you were interested in music. I said rather um, the first thing I thought of to say, you know, I blurted out, well I play this particular piece. Anyway, about ten days later I got this big invite on you know, a stiff white card, an invitation to David Lea to attend a musical evening at Chequers, black tie and so on. And so I turn up. And I'm shown into this room, not a lot bigger than this, and there was the Amadeus string quartet with Yehudi Menuhin, Pinces Suchuman and a couple of others. William Armstrong, Robert Armstrong and Ted Heath. And about a dozen other people. And Ted Heath eventually says right you've all got a drink, right, and he said, welcome, I'm sure we're going to have a marvellous evening. Yehudi, what are you going to play for us? So Menuhin gets up, I'll accompany something or other, he said Pinces what are you going to do? And so Suchuman goes off and then he says to one of the leaders of the Amadeus - and as you can imagine, I was absolutely scared out of my wits. My hair stood on ends. It's the only time I remember, you know, hair, how it stands on an end. It was standing vertically on end. I could feel it and my heart was going like that. And eventually there was an interval and I said to Robert Armstrong, I said, Robert you're not going to do this, he said we thought we would as a - joke asked me to play something. Anyway the moral of that story is never tell them you play the piano. But we thought we might get an agreement by about November 1972. And Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon I think thought we might get an agreement to name the two people that you've been talking to. I don't know what they've said about it but I would guess that by then it was not the principle that we couldn't have a good relationship with a Conservative government. In fact there was an argument about what we could deliver and so on and so forth. But it was quite a remarkable

U-turn. And if it had gone the other way and succeeded, I don't think that we would have heard quite so much of the argument about the outrageous constitutional innovation of the social contract. And the current parallel is the outrageous constitutional innovation of framework agreements in Brussels and so on. The fact was that it was a different way of life and Ted Heath we thought was a remarkable innovator in a sort of Jacques Delors vein in a different context. He was thinking ahead about what is the synthesis, if you don't mind that sort of, that way of looking at it.

He tried to get consensus didn't he?

He tried to get the social partners, trade unions and the employers, more committed, excuse the modern parlance, give them a bit more ownership of the process. It was too far ahead of its time possibly.

And Labour back in 1974.

Well, Labour, of course, if you take the CBI version of history. Then came in with a policy that it was standing only on one leg. They would claim that the social contract wasn't genuinely a social partnership. It was one half of a social partnership exclusive between the TUC and the Labour government. Actually that was beginning to be said by the CBI in the summer of '72 with Ted Heath. Because although they were in the room and at one stage the talks were ostensibly under the auspices of any NETC and Frank Figgus was the director general sitting in the corner, but it was really- It is said by CBI sources seen as a negotiation between the TUC in '86 and the ministers. And the CBI was somehow allowed into the room though we didn't think it was like that at all. But there is always this question who's delivering what and what about the employers? And that relates to the delivery mechanism in British industry on the part of the employers.

1974 was a remarkable era, wasn't it, because you had, you referred to the social contract. Some people say that that emerged, maybe, as a result of Jack Jones or other people, emerged from the liaison committee in the run up to the 1974 election where the TUC and the Labour party were trying to work out again a policy of co-operation on incomes, productivity, social planning, etc. So the social contract, some people say like Jack Jones, emerged from that dialogue in which, I think, you were involved.

Yes, I was the General Secretary of the TUC Labour Party Liaison Committee. And going right back to 1970s, and I've told you, we had this little understanding between Callaghan that there should be a robust policy through joint meetings between TUC leaders and the parliamentary leadership, that is a cabinet, or the shadow cabinet. And this led to the joint statement in March/April '74, immediately after the February 28th election. I remember in January '74 I was in Tokyo with Chris Chattaway, he was the Minister for Industry, and you'll remember that after the miners strike there was a great argument in the Conservative party, to put it mildly, about whether they should call an election, and what the election would be about. And I remember we had this policy in January in '74 saying that we would follow the miners if the miners were treated as a special case. And I said this meant

that there couldn't now be an election until late February and I remember Chattaway ringing up Peter Walker from Tokyo and we bet them the bill for this place we were in Tokyo and said yes there would be an election and I said there wouldn't. And Peter Walker said after that cabinet meeting he went back to Tokyo and said there wasn't going to an election. So I won the bet. I'm not saying whether Chris Chattaway did pay the bill. That would be unfair. But I think that there was some astonishment at the technical mistake made. But on the rebound, it was quite clear that the Labour Party were on a roll by saying that we will have voluntary agreement with the trade unions. And far from that being a down side politically, as was felt to be the case after '79 in all subsequent elections, not excluding the election two years ago, in 1997. In those days, in '74, both in the Spring Election February 28th '74 and in the October election, and when of course there was a much bigger majority, it was thought to be a great plus that the Labour Party was proposing a social contract. And, of course, the social contract started to connote something other than pay. It started to connote the question of pensions, heavily pressed by Jack Jones, but also such questions as the social wage, improved hospitals and education. And things like child benefit and so on.

In that sort of period of the social contract, which lasted, I suppose, the best part of four years, some remarkable sort of relationship developed between the trade union movement and the Labour government, perhaps unique even allowing for the whole range of things that have happened since 1945. That particular period, don't you think, was perhaps unique? In the relationship between the trade union movement and the Labour government.

Yes, remember that we were delivering, after an extraordinarily difficult world economic shock, the two oil increases. And you remember the oil price went up three times, from $10 to $30 or whatever. And there were restrictions on fuel and there was a knock on effect on inflation and it was essential to have a voluntary pay policy to bring down the rate of inflation. And I don't think there was more than a handful of people who said that somehow this should be ruled out on constitutional grounds. It was thought to be very, very desirable but we had the policy and in the successive years of course, it became a slightly more redistributed policy. I think it was '78 that we had the famous policy of £6. Or was it '77? But anyway the policy, no, it was '77, wasn't it? The policy of a flat rate for everybody and a cut off of £8,500. Now you can't have a policy like that going on for a long, long time. But there was the notion that there was public support to have some degree of redistribution tied up with the pay policy. And although some of the unions still felt that collective bargaining was our birth right, I think the majority very much saw that we had to be more pragmatic about this.

The actual £6 was '75, '76. And that was at a time also when public opinion polls were being taken about the trade union movement. And Jack Jones was seen as having more power and influence than any other figure in the country. Was that a healthy thing for the trade union movement? To have a figure like that.

Well, I think that trade unionism is very much the strongest force for giving the average person in Burton on Trent a bigger stake in society combined with a Labour government. And although the Economist newspaper, etc., would put on the front page Jack Jones, the most powerful man in the country, I think that there is always something rather tendentious about naming a trade union leader as opposed to the strength of the trade union movement. And I think there is the question of how come you had, not only a strong trade union movement, but how it was able to present a constructive and united contribution to economic reform. So yes, the trade union leadership was very influential and we didn't see anything wrong with that. I think that combined with Michael Foot being the Secretary of State for Employment and so on, the employers' propaganda, in the Daily Mail, etc., etc., propaganda, saying we're running the country. Well, they would say that, wouldn't say? I mean did they say the CBI were running the country in the next ten years? Well, it's political football isn't it?

That was the peak of post war trade union membership and perhaps power and strength, influence and authority, wasn't it? There were great tensions already building up before they went to discontent. During those periods from '75 right through to '78. But it was, I suppose, the peak of trade union influence.

Well, after 1979, yes there was a decline in trade union influence but whether that was somehow historically predetermined, because of changes in the world labour market as to some extent may be argued, or because of technological change, structural change and so on or because we'd blown it, as they say politically, in '78, '79 through our misunderstanding with Jim Callaghan about the election in '78 which was postponed until '79 - I think people will argue about. But there is no doubt that Mrs Thatcher on the rampage was very, very bad news for trade unionism.

Just before we come to the Thatcher years, can I ask you do you think 1979 a terrible period really, a critical period for the whole Labour movement could have been avoided?

Yes, we had, and you're reminding me of the sequence of events of which year was which. In '78 in the summer, the government said it wanted to announce a 5% pay policy in a white paper. And we said that we would find that very, very, very difficult because there had by then been about five years of pay policy one way or another, and we ought to get back to voluntary collective bargaining. We thought that the matter would be re-opened after the election which would be in the October of '78. And then, of course, you remember Jim Callaghan coming to Brighton and he will no doubt put his own gloss on this by saying that the, effectively as we now know, he meant that the election wouldn't be in October '78. Just to add to what then happened, we didn't immediately jump into the winter of discontent. We then had an attempt with Roy Hattersley to get a new policy together on a voluntary basis. But then, amongst other problems, there were problems on our own side, but problems also in terms of Terry Beckett, Managing Director of the Ford Motor Company. I think they busted a policy. And there were knock on effects from that. And things went from bad to worse. But we had, I think unanimously, and maybe

there were some dissenting voices - felt that, and said that the election should be in the October of '78 and we were very sorry that Jim Callaghan postponed it. So, and we don't want to live through that period again.

And incomes surfaced again. So in 1975 - I think it was July '75, the TUC, the trade union movement as a whole led by Jack Jones actually offering a £6 basic wage for everybody as a foundation for a new wages policy, a new pay policy, as all part of a social contract. That was a remarkable period, wasn't it?

Yes, it was, and, of course, Jack had the authority as General Secretary of the country's biggest union and a man of immense stature to give that sort of lead, which is quite difficult to give from Congress House per se because I have to say that when it comes to wages questions, I don't think it's quite so much true of legislative questions more generally, but when it comes to a pay policy, it's very vital that some big union leaders are personally helping give the lead. And Jack Jones undoubtedly did that. The converse is this argument about who's running the country. But people can't have it both ways. There was a need to do something drastic about the inflation question at a time when we'd had these two oil shocks and inflation to the 20s and so on and so forth. So I think that the idea that the TUC was running the country was a piece of Conservative party/Daily Mail propaganda. The fact is it was a remarkable contribution to the economic stability in the country.

Through the years of 1976, '77, '78, and the social contract was performing in the way you describe it, there were also great strains and stresses on the trade union movement within the movement quite apart from the leadership, wasn't there?

Yes. After all the natural internal democracy of a trade union, which is based on always seeking new achievements, doesn't sit happily with the TUC's role being to say no. I spent some of those years working through piles of claims, saying no you cannot have the relativity between the Leyland bus and truck division, etc. And, of course, it was very difficult for all of us but we were doing it pro bono publico and I think that history should give us some benefit for the contribution we made to economic progress.

So how did the winter of discontent, that terrible period from Christmas of '78 through the winter of 1997, how did that happen? What caused the breakdown there?

Well, a big misunderstanding in the summer/autumn of '78 with Jim Callaghan personally. We had a 5% white paper in the summer which privately we understood would be revisited after the election. Any white paper is going to be revisited after a general election, which we all knew was going to be in October '78. And we were astonished when there was this development at Brighton announced very soon afterwards that the election would not take place. We then had to see what could be done. Roy Hattersley discussed with us a variation on this policy with an emphasis on the price norm and I would say that the thing was first busted by the Ford Motor Company. Terry Beckett, the Managing Director of the Ford Motor Company, in I

guess October/November, and then of course we had the public sector pay problems but without describing who should have done what, we were very uncomfortable, very uncomfortable about the fact that we were trying to operate a policy which we'd strongly advised couldn't really continue for another year after five years of pay policy. So can I just mention one other way of looking at this? It's often said that the TUC didn't deliver. The TUC has always delivered everything that we promised to deliver. Take any year in the last 30 years. If we promise to deliver something, we have delivered it. We told the government in the summer of '78 that we could not deliver any more at that time. And anyway,

You mean Callaghan didn't listen to you?

I think that he felt that things were going well and we were the dog that perhaps had barked once too often and so on.

Had he listened to you, could 1979 have been averted in a way?

Well, it would have been a different 1979 if the election had been held, obviously, in October of '78, there's no doubt about that. You see the difficulty there is, I mean □ more expert than the Prime Minister about when to call the general election. And I must say it had those consequences.

And then, of course, you had the Thatcher years.

Well, yes. They were painful, not only because of the string of employment legislation against trade unions, to put it crudely, but the fact that somehow there was a breakdown in the public perception that trade unionism in the 70s had been very much a positive contributor to the economic and social development. And this one, I was going to say incident, it was more than an incident but trade unionism in the 70s equals disaster. And that was very, very painful indeed because of all the attempts that we had made and the achievements, I think it's fair to say pro bono publico running these very difficult policies in the 1970s all added up to in the folk memory was we had got beyond our station in life and we had ruined the economy. And that was very painful as well as the substantive changes that Mrs Thatcher made to the legislative framework affecting trade unionism.

So TUC in the wilderness no longer had access to No 10, although you tried it, at the very beginning with Mrs Thatcher to initiate talks but no joy. Did the TUC decide early on to look elsewhere for salvation?

I think we had two periods in the 1980s. The first was what I'd call cold turkey, when it took us an awful long time to realise that the world had been transformed. I think we still continued on auto pilot thinking that we ought to put in these representations for the budget and these representations on this and that and the other legislation. The idea that we weren't there, that no one was listening, we were wasting our time, we were a waste of space, to use the modern vernacular. It took an awful long time to sink in just as, if I may say so, it's taken some time for many members at the CBI at the moment to realise that the present Labour government is different from what they had experienced until 1997. It does take some time for the

new environment to get through to peoples' subconscious. And so it was particularly important that we had this opportunity coming our way from Europe by the mid to late 80s, particularly after Jacques Delors became, I think it was '85 he was elected President of European Commission. Perhaps we'll go on to them.

Fill that in, what about that?

Well, Jacques Delors was a trade unionist. He came from the CFTC, CFDT, well the French trade union tradition, putting a lot of emphasis on collective bargaining. He put a lot of emphasis on trade union autonomy and so on. He felt that Europe could work best by involvement of what he described as social partners. A lot of this jargon about social, of course, is a translation from the French, partner a*ssocio, dialogue sociale, dimension sociale,* and so on. And we translated social dimension, social partners and so on. But I mean it wasn't ever English, but now, I think we've taken to it like a duck to water actually. We're now the social partners conducting a social dialogue. And I don't think people ever, it really had an ironic twist in the □ when they say these things. Well, of course, it took some years for people to use this jargon but anyway going back to Jacques Delors, I had personally known Jacques Delors very well for a number of years because in the 1970s, '76 to '79, I was on a committee chaired by Jacques Delors called Economic and Social Concepts in □ - a so-called high level review body in the EU financed by the Commission you know. And we did this report. And so it was, to bring us up to date, in May 1988 we were in Stockholm for the ETC Congress. And I think it's fair to say, I had this brainwave and walking along the road we were laying a wreath actually on the tomb of Olaf Palmer and I was going on the road talking to Ron Todd. And I said, what about us inviting Jacques Delors to speak at Congress. And Ron thought for a minute and said, well there's no reason why we can't let the dog see the rabbit. And so I remember that expression and so after lunch I said to Jacques Delors, what about speaking at our Congress this year? And he said, of course I will, of course I will. So one thing led to another and it was an absolutely remarkable speech. Apart from anything else, he was the first person that gave us a vision of where we could go forward in the future. But specifically, and there was a standing ovation, he used expressions like the right of every worker to covered by a collective agreement. And he had some sort of scope for doing something about it. And a lot of people could hardly believe it. And exactly one month later, such was the impact of his speech, Mrs Thatcher gave the Bruges speech, saying no, no, no. To everything really. And I think that was also partly the work of Jacques Delors. Now I think there's one further development must be mentioned in this context, that thanks to the influence of Jacques Delors, we were able to conclude immediately before Maastricht in October '91 a framework agreement whereby we would recommend to the Commission that they recommend to the council ministers that the new treaties should give the scope for the social partners to look at possible instruments, legislation, in the social field, doing it through an agreement but which could be backed up by being a decision of council of ministers. We agreed this in October 31, 1991, the following Monday, November 2 '91, this was endorsed by the Commission and sent to the Council of Ministers who overwhelmingly supported it. I think that the inference was not correctly drawn by our own Foreign Office who then got to Maastricht and said that they would veto this and they wouldn't have to do with the social dialogue dimension. But Norman Willis has probably pointed out that

we were at that time, Norman was at that time the President of the ETUC. Norman and I went around all the capitals and saw all the prime ministers and presidents in November. We saw Mitterrand at the Elyse Palace, we saw Philippe Gonzalez in Castle Rosada in Madrid. We saw Andriotti in Berne. We saw Kohl a couple of times. We saw ... etc., etc. And they all said sure, they'd support this. It was very much the sort of thing they wanted. And, of course, by the time that John Major got to Maastricht, there was a terrible kafuffle because I think that half way through the night, they realised that we had this proposition we'd agreed with the socialist group and also with the Christian Democrat group to say that they would legislative powers laying behind the social chapter agreement. And I think that John Major then rang to, just mentioned that he thought we ought to go along with a voluntary version of it, not the full monty, as you might say, but something like a □ compromise. But the Director General of the CBI at that time, John Banham, said he was totally opposed to it. He rang to speak to Michael Howard, who was Secretary for Employment, who then said he would resign if Major signed it. And so Major didn't sign it and I remember briefing Tony Blair at about that time about what all this added up to from our point of view and he was very enthusiastic because, of course, from then on the Labour leadership was able to say, sign the social chapter, sign the social chapter. That became our main policy slogan for the European elections and many other elections subsequently, and I think gave the Labour Party a totally different momentum. They were on the front foot from then on in on Europe and on the question of the role of the trade union.

So where were we? 1988. Delors made, Jacques Delors made, he made quite an impact, didn't he?

Yes. And not only was it a totally different vision of where we were going but it was summed up in a very memorable phrase by Ron Todd in thanking him for his speech. He said something along the lines of brothers and sisters as you've heard this is a big opportunity and the only card game in town is now in a town called Brussels. And I think this phrase, the only card game in town, was memorable at two to three different levels. And obviously it meant that it had entered the folklore of the trade union movement that this is us, we're in Brussels and so on. And it connoted what Jacques Delors had actually been trying to say, that you will be able to sign framework agreements in Brussels and they will be able to be implemented. And you will be able to be in business by indication, he diplomatically stopped short of quite spelling it out quite in this way whatever Mrs Thatcher says. And that was proved to be the case. And can I just say that we now have an agenda which is still not complete but it has been filled in, in a remarkable way, we've made much more progress than we ever thought we actually would make. And some of us were a little bit sceptic about how far we could go but we've now got agreements which have been implemented by law in Britain on things like part-time workers, maternity leave, fixed term contract, parental leave more generally. There are the results of social partner agreements. And even the kafuffle to do with the working time directive, I say kafuffle because there was the argument of the hats transposed which is because of being a delay in transposition, it had to be done in a hurry by Ian MacCartney but I mean the fact is that the Conservatives had sat on it and had to be taken to the European Court of Justice. But this, for the first time, gives workers three weeks' holiday rising to four weeks' holiday. They never had that before.

And I think that you could go back to Lawrence Daly's days and say this is collective bargaining at a higher level. With the footprint also potentially being one where people in Burton on Trent would have this incorporated into their contract of employment and improve the quality of their contract of employment. At the time no one else was improving the quality of people's contract employment. But for Europe, it would not be part of the people's contract of employment to have these appended terms, but also the right to be involved in collective consultation on things like transfers of undertakings and redundancy. So this has been a remarkable transformation and the only question for the future that I'd like to additionally add at this point is, where does that leave collective representation generally. And it has dovetailed beautifully into what we've been doing in the last three years in developing our proposals on your voice at work, which, as we sit here now, today in the House of Commons, we've got to the report stage of employment relations bill. We have the two legs out of three already out in place of individual right of representation. And the collective representation in terms of collective bargaining, trade union recognition, when there is a majority that favour this and we hope that within a couple of years that we will get some rationalisation, some formula for the second leg which is collective consultation on certain questions. And there's still to be some tidying up of the position in Brussels. But we've already got the European works council regulations. Well, we're now winning elections, even in companies, I think, where there haven't been dominant trade union representation. I think companies like Rent-A-Kill, we would now have trade union members possibly winning elections. Conglomerate companies like PNO doing well in the elections there and so on. And raising the questions what is the substructure of subsidiarity, if you like, of these new European alliances to collective representation. So there's a whole world out there which is being spun off on and on and on from some of these 1988 commitments.

Are we moving into another kind of world in terms of trade union negotiation now? An international world. You mentioned Europe and the benefits that Europe is bringing to British working people. Are we in fact now moving into, in the next century, where international trade unionism will take over from national trade union centres?

I would say that the trade union architecture now has a far more important international dimension than ever before in a practical way. I mean at the level of sentiment and solidarity, there has always been a very strong international dimension. I mean yesterday evening we had a reception here for the Commonwealth TUC where the President of the Nigerian trade union was speaking. I think that at that level there has always been a tremendous commitment in the TUC, I mentioned Africa, India and so on before the war, during the war and after the war. But I think Europe has added something quite new, which is the ability to sign collective agreements. Now, of course, there isn't a necessary dichotomy between Europe and the rest of the world. On the European Works Council, it's now become established that our friends in the CIO - that's the American trade union movement, are saying, look we've seen the success of some of these developments in Europe and we're now more interested in how we can have some involvement with the United States. And some of the companies, of course, are indeed American companies. If you take the European Works Council within the General Motors area,

clearly General Motors is an American company, but we have a European Works Council. And the question arises why not make this part of the world council but with much more statutory right to information and involvement than would be the case through just trying to set up a world council without the sinews of Europe behind it. We haven't totally seen the end result of all this yet because as you know until France last week ratified Amsterdam, the changes whereby Britain becomes part of the social chapter have not yet, even now as we sit here, it's not yet happening. And the transposition of the European Works Council directives will not come about in Britain until October/November this year. But I think we're now changing gear and motoring quite fast in the direction of a strong European dimension, of European Works Councils. And I think that with the Euro coming about, the substantive agendas of the European Works Council will become very much more important than the sceptics have allowed for.

You mentioned the Euro. What is the trade union position on the Euro?

Well, we're having a big conference on May 13, which Gordon Brown is going to address, and I think that the overwhelming trade union view will be to back the government national changeover plan, prepare for that with the strong expectation, assuming that the Euro goes well, and I think there's been a temporary blip with the problems of the German economy, etc. But assuming that the Euro goes well by the year 2000, 2001, I think that everyone knows that the plan is likely to be that the Labour government will have a referendum very soon after the next election. And the ministers have put their political weight behind it. I think Tony Blair has already made it clear that there isn't going to be a referendum like '75 - you can vote whatever you like. I mean I think that the cabinet will be behind the yes recommendation. And assuming that is the case, that the TUC, I guess, will be strongly behind that recommendation as well. So that's the sort of change to the motoring metaphor but I think the phrase change of gear was used by the Prime Minister in his statement. Well, you can't change gear and go backwards, can you ? I mean you're changing gear to go faster forward. And I think that's what's happening.

The Blair government and its relations with the trade union movement and the TUC, of course, in particular, are substantially different from any previous experience of a Labour government, the Atlee government, the Wilson government, Callaghan government, the Blair government is that uniquely different in its, almost distancing from the kind of closeness that you experienced in the past. Is that a difficulty?

I think it is less difficult now than it was at the time of election when, if you read Philip □'s book, I think there was a very strong feeling that the Woking classes, to use the pun I think he uses, would be voting Labour to the extent to which they could see that there was not very much to do with the trade unions. I think that many of the other things that I've been saying obviously imply that that's not the whole story. And I think that as we move towards the summer of this year and the Prime Minister will be saying more positive things. We're quite sure about the social partnership dimension and trying to get a long-term settlement on industrial relations, I think that the experience of the Labour government and the confidence that that has

engendered will mean that there is a much more comfortable relationship on both sides. Much better than it was in that regard from about two years ago.

I think we, unless you have other thoughts, we've covered a large section,

Shall I have a quick look?

Because we're going to take up with John.

Yes, no, no, no. I'm not,

This afternoon.

One question I think that I'd like to ask David and probably Ian will have a similar thought, is that going back now reflecting over the history of the TUC, are there any highlights and figures that you'd like to talk about? Woodcock was,

Yeah, because he's clocked up 35 years now.

I think that, I don't want to kick through my own goal but I think it would be odd if you didn't ask me about isn't all this Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. I mean since '79, trade union membership has halved and you sit here looking all sort of suave and generally complacent about how marvellous everything is. And you can gloss everything till you come out of your own orifice but I mean the fact is that this is, I mean this isn't on the -

Do you want to stop?

Has it stopped?

No, it hasn't stopped. Don't you care to stop?

Well, don't put that on, please. I thought I was talking to you. Yeah, but I mean I think that it may be that you would want to ask me the question, and I think we ought to have some view about how we get from where I've been talking to where John will be talking. Because otherwise it'll make it look as if we hadn't noticed that half of our membership has disappeared .
I'd also like to conceptualise here, David, a little bit more, just go on to say what his title and how it's changed if it has over the years and how long you've been doing it and all that kind of stuff. I don't think we've established him quite clearly in his role.

You've had, what it is - 35 years at the TUC,

And I'll be finishing this year. And I think that the nadir of our fortunes obviously were perhaps, I mean I would have said mid 80s, GCHQ, trade unionism is not compatible with being part of civilised society almost. You know. And the very

hostile view which I think it is fair to say that the fall in our membership has been partly structural change and so on, but I don't think you can say that a degree of hostility is from the government. And allowing employers to feel that they have no public policy encouragement to have anything to do with collective bargaining, I think all of those factors have had a strong negative result on our levels of membership. Equally, it has taken some time for unions to switch resources, and I think John Watts will be talking more about this and where we go in the future. But I think that the fall of membership obviously has been a major preoccupation, and that is why what I've been talking about, you see, my job covers the representation at work task group and the legislation now is going through Parliament which also covers Europe. And I think it's a very, very interesting connection that no one now doubts that there has to be something sort of means of representing people in companies above a certain size. Are we going to have universal systems of elections? Are we going to rely on the traditional model of trade union recognition? Whichever we do, there is no way in which this can, I make mention of the problem of trade recruitment, where the context is better than it's been in the last 20 years so we must seize that opportunity and I mustn't give you the impression that we're just sitting here and thinking that Brussels or indeed Stephen Byers or whoever can pull the chestnuts out for us. On the contrary, there are challenges to what people want out of trade unions in a world of individualism. I would say on that point about individualism that the personal contract is a lower quality contract of employment and the sort of quality contracts of employment have arised as from collective agreements. If you stop and think about it, what is being the way in which most people have got into the superannuation schemes? Through a collective agreement. How is it that most people are covered on the grounds of good agreements on sick pay or on redundancy or so on, a lot better than the minimum statutory requirement? It is though collective agreements. The collective agreement becomes the employed term of the individual contract of employment. The idea that employers are disinterested in saying, oh we can do better for you if you are on a personal contract and don't bother with a collective agreement. Unless you're a football star and getting .1 million a year, there may be one or two where the personal contract does you quite nicely thank you, but for most people it is a deterioration in the quality of their contract of employment. So I think that the penny or the Euro, I suppose you have to say now - has now started to drop and that people will see what we might call the case for trade unionism, undoubtedly we're more popular than we've ever been. I hope it's not just an inverse corollary with the fact that our membership has declined. But I mean it's not as if there's now a political or industrial context which is not conducive to trade unionism. It means that people have got to specifically know why they should pay their .100 a year or whatever to actually become a member and the answer to that is that trade unionism is workplace up and that you've got to have people actively volunteering for some of the mundane tasks and opportunities at different levels of the trade union, but it does depend on the base of being very, very active. And I think that's where we are now in reconciling all these kinds of things I've been talking about, about framework agreements and so on with the trade unions seizing the opportunities of recruitment and improving the quality of the contract of employment through the quality of the industrial agreements which have been our mainstay over many years.

In your 35 years at the TUC, David, you′ve been in so many various positions, in the economic department, you′ve been Secretary of the Economic Department until you eventually rose, you were at one time you challenged for General Secretaryship and you are now going out after 35 years as Assistant General Secretary. Across that fabric of time, which period would you pick out as the most exciting, maybe the most dangerous and which individuals have given the most inspiring leadership here? People like George Woodcock, for example. How would you list that in your replyl?

Well, it's not I think a total coincidence that here we are sitting in a room with Ernest Bevan over there and saying that individuals don't matter. Individuals give a lot of inspiration to people. I think Woodcock did give that inspiration in the '50s and the '60s as having an intellectually coherent view about where trade unionism was going. I would certainly mention the two people who you've also had on film outside of the range of TUC general secretaries, Len Murray and Norman Willis. And I certainly think you have to mention Jack Jones and Hughie Scanlon as people who've made, left an indelible mark on the trade union movement. There are problems about identifying individuals but I would link it with the sort of architectural changes that one associates with the different people in the different periods of time. After all, and like this is a general overview point, trade unionism is very strongly correlated with a healthy democratic society. If you look around the world, the best, I mean literally around the world, North and South, East and West, the best correlate of equality in a country, the rights of the average bus driver, etc., the best correlated equality is trade union density, trade union membership. That remains the case. We have seen a decline, and the Treasurer only yesterday published his report about the increase of inequality. Well surprise, surprise I was a member of a Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth in the late 1970s, the Diamond Royal Commission, and we found, I don't think it was challenged in any way, that in the last 100 years till then there had been, people take trade cycles and so on - a long term move towards greater equality in society. Compatible with greater efficiency, compatible with economic growth averaging 2% or whatever, and this had produced a much healthier society and there was no reason why that could not continue. And yet, we have now in the last 20 years seen, as the Treasury has demonstrated a reversal of that income distribution to a pre war distribution. And by any measure a growth of poverty. Now I repeat, as one of the leading indicators of the growth of inequality and the growth of poverty, we've had a decline in trade union membership whereas in the previous 100 years, off and on, you can see in all the cycles the best correlation of improved equality and improved life chances, and equalities of contracts of employment of people is the growth of trade union membership. So you cannot have short cuts just through tax benefit improving the quality of life for people. You have to have a strong trade union movement. And I think that would be the way in which I would combine what you might call the major names that one would identify in this period and what you might call the real significance of what they were all doing.

The man who was here, the General Secretary, when you began, George Woodcock, he posed the question at one time what are we here for brothers? Has that question been answered in your time here?

It's never going to be answered fully. I mean it's, implies that there is some end game after which we can all sort of pack up shop and go home. And it's not like that. This is an ongoing role that we are talking about. I think John Monks might be talking about some of the structural challenges of membership and representation and the relations with - Well, George Woodcock, I am sure was getting at the fact which has been borne out more than a little in the subsequent 30, 40 years, that we have to adapt the methods of trade unionism and take this question of European framework agreements. We have to adapt this to the circumstances and always make those connections. Now just to take one practical illustration, there has been a

growth now to something like 25% of people on part-time contracts, at least of new contracts, something like that. We have now got fixed term contracts and a boss's agreement on fixed term contracts. We have to transpose those into UK law somehow and we think it's much better to do it with the CBI to through a sort of framework agreement in Britain. Now I think Woodcock would have been totally on board for that sort of thinking. Now how you actually do it, you've got to see the principle of what you're doing and then somehow apply it. And I think that there is an educational exercise, just as there's going to be an educational exercise in many of the new opportunities opened up by the employment relations bill. So it's a question of seeing goals, means and methods. And having a logical relationship between them. And I don't think Woodcock was trying to be very much more obscure than what I've said and I think that people have sometimes thought that this is a piece of obscure philosophising. It's not. It's absolutely essential to know the relationship between the objectives, your means and your methods. And we have to revisit that from time to time and that's what we're doing now.

Thank you