

**INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS MURPHY BY DAVID WELSH AND JAN POLLOCK ON 27 JUNE  
2011 FOR BRITAIN AT  
WORK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Chris Murphy worked on exhibitions at Earl's Court since the late 60s. He became a shop steward and then a convenor in the ASW, Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, which merged in the 70s with the bricklayers and painters unions as UCATT, Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians. He was blacklisted after a dispute over the Motor Show being moved from Earl's Court to Birmingham and went on to be the convenor of shop stewards at London Transport Parsons Green joiners works and worked on London Underground till his retirement in 2010.

*DW: This is an interview with Chris Murphy on Monday June 27 2011 for the Britain at Work project and it's at Chris's home and the interview is with Dave Welsh and Jan Pollock. Chris, would you mind starting with when you were doing exhibition work.*

Well, yeah I mean I got a job probably it was by accident in the exhibition, I had no intention of going there, and that was in the 70s, end of the 60s, beginning of the 70s, it was a closed, a pre-entering closed shop small industry, highly paid because of the nature of exhibitions. There was a lot of overtime. I can't remember the year but in the 70s, end of the 60s, into the 70s, Barbara Castle was the Minister of Employment or whatever they called the department then, and mainly it was the shop stewards – I wasn't a shop steward at this time – within the exhibition industry were looking to improve their terms and conditions, and I suppose you could give the credit to the Communist party, because they had influence, they had a number of people who worked in the industry, the shop stewards were members and there was a run of guerrilla one day stoppages which effected the industry and in the end I think Barbara Castle and I can't remember anybody else but they had a review of the industry and she done us, I got to say, a favour because her recommendations were to reduce the hours that the industry worked, because you could work as many hours as you wanted for the employer and decreased the wages.

So we ended up at the end of this, I mean as I said I hadn't been in the industry long, at the end of this I become a shop steward, I suppose getting near the end of the dispute. I mean I was out on strike and my eldest son was born when I was on strike, he's 40 now, so that's how many years ago it was. But she doubled our wages and also an agreement was reached with the employers and the unions. Our hours would be reduced so you could work overtime but you could only work a maximum of 2 hours in the evening, or 9 hours on the Saturday or 9 hours on the Sunday, not both, and then later on the Sundays were taken out. You know that it was the long term, you know bring it in, but what it did do it helped to employ more people in the industry because prior to this people used to be, you might get 3 weeks work and then laid off and then you look around and you might find another firm and you get 3 months. But at this time of the year in the summer it used to be dead. So even though the exhibition firms still employed people the numbers were greatly reduced. So that was me sort of introduction. I was in a union before that you know, I was in the union, I mean UCATT or as it was then the ASW, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, but we merged in the 70s with the bricklayers and the painters union to form UCATT.

*You'd always been in a union, you were involved as a carpenter? Could you tell me basically why did you get involved in the union because obviously lots of people don't? Oh yeah, yeah. Well I mean, I suppose what made me was working in the exhibition was me first experience of being a steward. I mean I was only in my early 20s, and I hadn't finished me apprenticeship till I was 20. Of course I started at 16 for a year apprenticeship. How could I put it, seeing how the employers treated people and in that industry it was the unfairness, like people would be given the opportunity of working more overtime than someone else, and I wasn't very political then but it didn't look right, and all it was about was favouritism. You know that person would do things for the governor that somebody else wouldn't you know what I mean. Whatever logic that the employer used, to me I think it was fairness. I think that's always been me, you know if you get*

£10 for doing a job, you all had £10 for doing the same job. I mean, it's silly but I've always believed at the back of me mind you know that's how life should be. But then I moved on in the exhibition and I enjoyed it, I enjoyed being a steward.

*What did you enjoy about it?* Making changes, even though they might be small, not on a world stage, but you know another couple of quid on the lodging allowance. I got 16 introduced in the industry during that one, so I got one introduced on the firm which took a long time and it was only £5 a day. You know if you were off sick after a week but all that we were getting was the state benefit you know. So that was it and then you know I moved, I become a convenor and on every show there used to be, like say the Motor Show or the Ideal Homes, the first day of the build up a meeting would be called of all the stewards who would elect the convenor for the show. Now that could be any steward and that person was then full-time. I mean this is in the days when you didn't have full-time like you do these days, and that person's job was to go around making sure everybody was a member of the union, who was working, not the exhibitors, but erecting the stage, you know the displays, and that they were getting the right money.

You know there was a rate in the book and if you weren't getting the rate you didn't work in there. I mean that weren't my rules, that was you know the working, the trade unions had agreed. So, and I got our lads into a number of, you know over the years most convenors on the big jobs and then it was about 1978 the unions made an agreement with the employers with no consultation of the membership for an attendance allowance that the industry wasn't, but how can I put it, guys started work at 7 O'clock during the week and all day Saturday, but they wouldn't come in Monday, they'd have the day off, they wouldn't get paid for it, but the employers wanted to stop this, but the attendance allowance was a flat rate and it wasn't on your salary, before your wages it was called, it wasn't on your overtime. So you're working overtime for a lesser rate.

So there was me and a guy called Jimmy Ayles, whose long time dead, who was the secretary of the liaison committee, when Alfie was the chairman for years Jim was working in the industry at that time and there was another fella whose also dead, who was a backroom boy, but there were 2 of them, there was Bob Williams, he's still alive, and Ted Needs, he died young, heart attack, and we had the hump about it, well I had the hump anyway. We got a stewards meeting for the industry, which was basically London then, and were organising a campaign to get it put on the hourly rate you know. You know 5 pence an hour, whatever it worked out and then we find out that, we knew it was coming, that they were moving the Motor Show to Birmingham, because they wanted, the unions and the employers and the government I believe wanted to put work into Birmingham, they wanted to take away the power of the shop stewards in London and they weren't so powerful, you know they had to convince the members that it was right.

But, so anyway we decided to have a dispute and we went to Birmingham, a number of us from different firms. It had all been decided, the shop stewards were going to have action, and you go to the show and they elect the convenor, but in Birmingham, because it's massive, it had 7 halls in them days I think or was it 8.. You needed loads of convenors and you needed say 7 convenors but then you had a senior convenor, who was in over on the whole show. So I got that job on that show and we won the battle, we had one half a day strike. We had a mass meeting that they never heard of. I was threatened with me credentials being taken away, I was chauffeur driven by an official of UCATT to the regional secretary's head office in Birmingham and told you know, the EC and the general secretary were coming up tomorrow, they're going to take your credentials away. I said fair enough but we're still going on strike, someone else would take over. But it was all cobblers, it never happened.

So we won the issue and then the firm I was working for, as I said they were the biggest firm, employed around a hundred people, that was big, that was when it had plenty of work, most of them were in their 30s and 20s you know, weren't big firms. The firm I was working for, low and behold, closed down and then they opened up again down in deep Surrey. So then I was blacklisted from the exhibition, and then I went to a meeting in the evening, UCATT shop stewards meeting. Well, I could go but I wasn't a steward at the time, and I went and no one

threw me out because I was known you know and I was a branch secretary you know, and I bumped into someone there afterwards and we had a drink and he told me about, why don't you come and help me out in London Transport. So I got a job at Parsons Green in the joiners shop and it was a lovely place to work. I've never met so many nice people in all me life.

So I worked, while I was working there, me and my mate Ted who I mentioned earlier, he was there, and I suppose within about 18 months I had one full-time convenor who was, he was getting on, he was very right-wing, being racist, mind you racism was common in them days, and there were a few stewards who said how about you? Because they had elections every year, they was all in the constitution in January. I said well if you want me to run, yeah alright. So I run and I won, and I stayed in office until they shut it down. *So what year did you go on LT?* It was in the 80s I think, yeah, I think it was the end of the 70s, maybe 1980, 1979, something like that. And we had a review, you know I hadn't been the convenor for 6 months and they announced that they were going to make a hundred people redundant, and in them days London Transport didn't make anybody redundant. You know you died at the job.

So we had a fight and they were there for the labourers, which you know labourers' jobs they were always hard to get and the lowest paid in any part of the building industry, and we won that battle, and we won it really because Ken just got elected. We had a mass meeting in Camden Town Hall, which we got for free because Keith my mate was the convenor of the DLO in Camden and he was also a part member. And we never had no money as a shop stewards committee. They never had money, you know we never had. And so while we were at the meeting and one of the guys was going to put the money up out of his own pocket, which is about a hundred quid, which is a lot in them days, and we were going to have like a collection saying oi, but we didn't have to in the end because they got it for us and I don't know what he done but he done something.

But he knew everybody to know on the Council, and we had Livingstone there. He was opposition at the time, he weren't leader, but he was the, what do you call it, Shadow Transport person or whatever the title was. He come and he said, he read out a letter, it said remove Horace Cutler, basically saying you make these redundant I'll state, say that but that was the line and he was true to his word. He hadn't been in office 3 days, I got a phone call, you got to go to a meeting, Festival Hall, and they were all there, you know the RMT, the NUR as it was, the T&G, you know all the big boys, and we was small, asked the question, it was 3 stewards, don't know who the bloke was but he asked the question, someone asked the question. Livingstone weren't there, it was the chairman of RMT then asked the question. Well I'll better, I will, we're going to wrap up the meeting, we're organising a meeting next week with all trade unions.

So the redundancies were called off and we went on working normally you know, and then of course they privatised us, to a degree, and they closed us down. You know like they did at Chiswick and all these depots. So you know we all, we had a dispute to stop it but we lost and they paid everybody off, except the apprentices who hadn't finished their apprenticeships, and they kept them on and they moved them to other parts of LT, and some to other employers, you know to get them. But it was a bad day you know. *And that was about 1980?* 88, around 88, yeah I'm sure it was. *So how many people worked roughly for direct labour?* Twelve hundred. *And could you give some examples of what they would have been doing? What was the job of direct labour on London Underground?*

Right, it was work on the Underground and the bus garages and the depots. So most of the underground work, not all, most would be done of the night, when the power was off. So we'd paint stations, you know the nosing on the platform, nosing stones where all our blokes broke their bloody fingers but anyway. They're deadly them things. *What on the edge of the platform?* Yeah, you know because they're quite big and heavy. I mean we solved it in the end but we did have some accidents. But they'd repair them, and then decorate the station. They might do work in the booking hall, you know security, repairing benches, but some of the work could be done during the day, you know like a door's fallen off in someone's office, or it was hanging off, they could go and do that during the day.

And of a night they used to clean, had a programme of cleaning underneath the wooden escalators, the plumbers done that, because they put in these new things; sprinklers. You know I've always thought if we could have been there whether King's Cross would have ever happened, but I can't prove it, every 3 months I think it was they used to do it, plumbers were excluded from it. On shift work you could earn so much. So they'd do so many stations on the escalators, they'd go in when the station closed and take off you know on the escalator and test it and put new ones on where they had to, things like that, cleaning the drains. And in the bus garages they done the same, there was a programme of maintenance for the, how can I say, that worked in jobs like cleaning cars, cleaning sewers, trying to think, doing the gutters, cleaning the sewers out, or it was something else? But there was a programme that this office block had to do. It had to be done once every 3 months, but once a year you know and they would do you know each office had their book and they had to work to these schedules. I don't think they always did.

And then there was emergencies, you know something happened and they'd be out there to fix it. Where was it when the train crashed in the tunnel? Moorgate. We had people down there, that was before my time, but our guys, because we had people used to work, and it was say the Oval, it would be their turn on the rota, so they'd be on the call out, so they could... and then they privatised us or outsourced us, whatever you want to call it to some building firm in the year 2000, October 2000 with a 10 year contract. So we went through 2 intermediary stages to the pensions scheme, it was a sodding nightmare, but I learned a lot. Mrs Murphy: I told him some because I'd already been through it. CM: Well, yeah. I ended up finishing last July, was it June or July, mainly because of this, even though I had this about 3 years ago, I was still going to work, and because, or before this you know I got Diabetes, I've been sticking needles in myself since I was 18, and then I had a triple-bypass, and I got over that and went back to work you know, and worked you know gradually and then worked full-time.

I give up smoking because of me ticker and then I got this, and I still went back to work. And they virtually said to me you sure you don't want to go on medical retirement Chris, here you are. But they didn't do that but you know because you get your pension made up, but I'm 65 in January and between my 3 children and she who must be obeyed all going 'retire, retire, retire', and it got harder and harder, you know because I get tired quick, you know quicker than I used to. MM: It was the travelling more than anything wasn't it, the distance to Islington. CM: Oh yeah and me doctor, I spoke to me doctor because me, the guy, the surgeon who done me operation. He was quite but I kept on working but you know he said it would do you good if you can. But me doctor she hummed and haad and she give me a certificate for 12 months, which I've never seen one before, they're a different colour.

Anyway, when the firm got back it was like, mind you I say this if the management were there, because they had a change of management, the managing director If he'd been there I would've still been there because he wouldn't been, he'd said to me when I had this done, he said do you want to come back? There's a job for you. You can do that but you can talk, you can come and he was treating and you know we had terrible rows. I mean I, well I did stitch him up, I'd done 'em for 50 thousand pounds, because they were underpaying people, about 9 months before I left, didn't I. He screamed like a stuck pig, the names he called me, because he'd been underpaying them for years, blue star. They'd been paying them a lower rate. We didn't know you know because they would never show you their pay slips.

So even with all that, so I, you know I stood down, I could have argued but I wouldn't have, I don't think I would have got a doctor to say I was fit enough to you know carry on working. Then again I mean I was elected to the EC of UCATT, which is lay and I was the chairman of the London regional council for about 12 or 8 years. I've been on the EC since I think '98. MM: I was before you wasn't I. CM: Yeah, and I'm still on there you know, but this is me last term, I'll be finished when this ends you know, 2013 it ends, I'll be finished then, but I'm still on CITB committee on behalf of the union for training and pension committee, you know the group of the trade unions that are arguing at the moment, like a committee that made the full-time officers

and we like, after the Lord Mayor's Show you know, we'd just bring up the stuff and we'd meet afterwards and they'd tell us what's going on. The lay reps. So I'm still involved, I'm branch chairman. What else am I doing? Pensions, CITB. MM: Pensions. CM: No, I said pensions.

*So were you branch secretary even way back on LT? Can you tell us a bit about that, did branches meet in the evenings or off-site I suppose, what was the branch structure?* Yeah, see the branch structure's different to what you would have on the rail side. UCATT don't, or the building unions, I'll say that because the unions used to work the same before we merged in their branch structure and we still do. We have a branch in an area not related to a job, like the world and local government do you know. Like you get UNISON who have like Camden branch. Well, we have a Camden branch but it's not just for the Council. So when I was in. MM: It's residence related rather than work related. *Residence rather than work.* Yeah, when I was in London Transport there was a local branch too, Parsons Green, London number 3. It's gone now but most of the people in Parsons Green, most, not all lived in a vicinity of that. So usually they went in that but my branch was Wandsworth because I lived over here.

So my branch had nothing to do with the job, where London number 3 which never met at Parsons Green, met down the road and you know been there before. They'd been there for years you know, I don't know maybe 80 years. There might be a discussion about London Transport there but they weren't all London Transport members in the branch. So that's how our branches work. As they say it's to do with the rules, the rules say the nearest branch to your home address and that's always been because of the convenience you know. UCATT got very few branches that are linked to jobs but they do exist. I think there are about, try to remember, there's about 1 or 2 in the country. *What about, tell us about the London structure, what was the London structure?* What in UCATT? Right, well the London structure is, things have changed in UCATT but I'll just give it to you how London was. London had 5, London was divided into 5 divisions and within them divisions there were a number of branches in each of them.

And then divisions would elect members every 3 years. It's now 5 but every 3 years to the regional council, and the regional council was the governing body for London, and they meet, still do meet every month but it's not usual but they can meet every week at other meetings, so all them that are elected can attend and the regional council sizes depends on income size, income and percentage terms. The biggest regional council you can have is 9 members for any regions and the smallest you can have is 4. So regions that are small haven't got a lot of members, haven't got a lot of income. With the formula we'd have a small, now London's got 9 and also if you've got over a hundred women within the region you can have a woman selected, but we got very few women when I was in the union, we've always had very few women.

So, and then the regional council, their lay members, not full-time officer, can't be a full-time officer, they elect a chair and a vice-chair and then the region, as the regional secretary whose a full-time employee, but then you have officials who work under that person who's the regional secretary. The regional secretary has to attend all the regional council meetings or a deputy. I mean if a person's ill you know one of the other officials can stand in and he designates or she designates and then we appoint officials which is to elect them, but a number of years ago I didn't think it was a good idea but anyway I lost that, wouldn't be a point. In the EC is lay and... I agreed with the company or the authority, like I was on this deal, a new deal with the business of the people, of their complaints. You could deal with a lot of it or a little of it, or it all depends on individuals and their capabilities, or you could get the officials in, like I got the officials in when you need help.

Now on the big sites we've had like the Olympics, Wembley and other sites around London, we negotiated with employers, UCATT, and we had a full-time convenor and he deals with the members on that site, health and safety checks, recruits the board you know, tries to get stewards elected, safety reps elected. But if there's a problem he can't deal with it or he's nervous, or thinks it's above you know, they phone up one of the officials on his mobile and say oi come and help us and they go down there. So our officials go around sites, they visit sites that we haven't got any representation on to tell people about the union. They visit sites. JP: *Did they*

*get let on the site then, because there were members there they let you on? Yeah, not every employer that we have got a right under the working rule agreement to go on sites. And what happened, especially these days the people let you in, and they joined and they got direct debit, having it docked out of your wages, which is fair enough, they could do that.*

But in my view that's so the employer don't know they're in a trade union, they got that little insurance in their back pocket. And then because they've got the details, if they're on a site where they haven't got anybody, they phone the office and the official, I mean the official might go on the site or they might say well, can I meet you I in the café round the corner. I mean all sorts of things happened. *It's so different to what I'm used to where everybody in the one workplace is in the branch, or you might have a big branch with several different bits but I mean at least you're all in it together and you know you are because you can see all the other ones but it's a very different kind of way.* If we just say the Olympic village, we used to have a branch up in the Olympic village, they'll be there maybe 3 years and then we'd have to shut it down, when the same branches, some sites only last 6 months, some sites might last 4 years. *It depends on what you're doing as to how you have to organise.*

And the way of the industry is these days, you don't get someone to go on a site, start off, work and then when the site's finished, you know it's over if the building's complete, they leave. This sums it up, say you got someone comes in and does for argument's sake the foundations, someone else goes in and does the steel work, another bloke, they might be over there 6 months, I'll be over there 3 months doing their little bit, then they're off. And I mean that's not, because years ago you had people that worked for say McAlpine. And McAlpine would have hundreds on a building site when they were building something. You'd be lucky today if you find McAlpine's got 10. Because it's all, it's so down and all they do, they manage it, they get a percentage from managing it off the site, and they employ you know the contractor to do this, a contractor to do that.

*DW: So is that the really big change say since the 60s? They started calling it packages and somebody, I mean if you went round a building site and say to a contracts manager, how many packages you got on this job? He'd more likely give you one for I suppose the air conditioning, one for the electrics, one for the second. I don't know how many but yeah and you got to get people on there and not only be on their a month. So does that mean then that you've got lots of small firms contracting for this or even individuals, self-employed or both? Both. And is it that that makes it much more difficult to organise? You've got starting after the building strike in 72 what we called the Lump self employment and the employers went down that road and convinced a lot of idiots, I'm afraid they were misguided, to go self employed.*

They were talking about saving paying income tax. These days it's, what is it? a CIS4, that's your self-employed, now you can work for me, I dunno, building me a new brick wall over there and you know the builders hire you work for me for 15 years Dave, which is self-employed, which technically is wrong because you're not self employed, you go to work when I tell you, you use my materials, it's not the definition of a self employed person, but they get away with it. And why they get away with it is two, one is they only pay 18% income tax, the rest is self employed, the employer don't pay no National Insurance for Dave, you get your self employed stamp, so they're saving about 9% there, it's the biggest rip off you've seen.

We done, we got a new report coming out this year on it, how much has been embezzled from the Inland Revenue and we had one done about 5 years ago by, I don't know if you've heard of him. Mark Harvey, Professor Mark Harvey out of East Anglia University. He done a report and he's doing another one for us. It's billions they're losing in revenue, like where we get our you know pennies at the end of the month in the bank they've all been in there and taken their bit out, you know the pensions, the National Insurance, the Income Tax, you got them and you think how much you're saying if you've got a hundred people and you're paying no National Insurance for them. *And you said this was because after the 72 strike, so this was the employers new strategy?*

Yeah, to defeat the unions so we couldn't. *The 72 strike was over pay wasn't it and that was a victory, so then the employers thought well we're going to do this now in order to smash the unions and get back.* Yeah, I mean it weren't in the short but I mean in the long term campaign by them, because it's been rolling on since I don't know 72, 73, when they started it. *JP: That is long term.* MM: It's a different form of CCT, and that was basically so the local authority was involved. CM: So you got, but the thing is you see what we did do at the beginning of the 90s when the working time directive come in, when was that, must have been 75, 95 wasn't it or 96, we went after holiday pay for self-employed, because they think self-employed had run away from a union but now they don't because we took their cases to tribunals and we won. So this pay, you know redundancy pay and holiday pay. I mean some of them went to the Court of the Appeal. *DW: European Court.*

Yeah, so it was a long campaign, we run you know a case here, a case there, and we did establish they should be treated the same in law so they're not treated the same, but that isn't what the Inland Revenue say a self-employed person should do, it's no different to what we say. Yet people, you can have a company might have 200 people. I don't know a company does but you know 200 people, all got this, CIS4s, and they don't have to pay 9% of their pay National Health contributions, save a lot of money and the income tax is less. So I mean we've had the dispute with every government since the 80s and it's like talking, well I'll get more sense out of that brick wall. Because it's, I think Mark Harvey, 5, 6 years ago, it was billions over the years the state could have had.

*Yet again now we hear talk of cuts it's another rip off isn't it by building employers.* And the thing is I mean in my day I didn't like paying income tax, no one in this country likes paying income tax, you know what I mean, but I didn't mind paying National Health contributions because I've had all mine back, and yourn and yourn I think, you know the amount of money they spend on me every week to keep me breathing. When you think about it, why should I have to go to work and what am I paying now, is it 22 or 23% plus take 9% or 6% cash, can't be that much? saves 30% for argument's sake. Then there's your self-employed allegedly paying 18% and maybe 16 for a self-employed stamp.

*I want you to go back to, I know you weren't there then but the 72 strike, because I do remember in the 60s there was some very big disputes in the Barbican. But there was also the building of the Victoria Line, I mean that must have employed lots of people who were in UCATT, and I wonder was that the reason why the 72 strike happened? Was it that the union UCATT was very confident by the 70s that it could take on the employers?*

I don't think it was the leadership, it was the rank and file, I mean it, really it was they were being paid washers. They were badly paid and the slogan was a pound an hour, 35 hour week. Now they never got it, the 35 hour week, but they got the biggest rise they ever had up till then you know, and what happened was, I mean I wasn't there but it was the delegate conference for UCATT, and there were loads of resolutions in as I understand it from people who attended it, looking you know for a decent rate of pay for highly qualified skilled people. The leadership were reluctant, so it was the rank and file really overturned the leadership, which quite often happens in UCATT, and the strike was called. And the thing with the strike was if you were the employer Dave and I was the steward, and I come in the office and I'll sit and this is what the demands are.

You know just say about a pound an hour, 35 hour week, what's that going to come to a 35 hour week and you went yeah, alright, you pay it, that site could carry on working, fine. Now you said no, I don't want it, on your bike, well then it was stopped and it was, it was a mass picketing site, the miners' strike, it was working and they were being paid the rate that the unions were trying to get. They'd be coming in, picketing outside and I think that was happening, I'm not saying all round the country, some of the deserted places you know up in the isles in the Hebrides you know that way but early on it was countrywide and it worked from the Easington area, London had it's own committee running a dispute in the London area, for the sites in London. They meet on a regular basis you know. The officials would attend the meetings you know and there would

be what sites they were going to go to, who were their people there and that you know. You know they work out plans, strategy, leafleting, you know the usual campaigning, in the end we won. And as I said it was the biggest increase that we'd ever had up to then. But that's when the employers come up with this idea.

*In UCATT has the rank and file always been quite strong and independent within the union? I mean have they always prided themselves on that?* Well, it did for many years, I think it's gone down and it's not because of me getting old, it has gone down, you know the attitude of the rank and file. *Why do you think that?* I dunno, I mean, I think one of the biggest, I know a lot of people wouldn't agree with this but my view is that one of the biggest losses to the labour movement was the Communist party as it was in this country, because as it was, I'm talking before the democratic left, it had some really brilliant industrial thinkers and there's a lot of legislation that went, you know some of them are great academics from the party into the branches to the national office of the TUC, to the Labour party. You know, I mean some of it got watered down, yeah, some of it got totally cut to pieces.

But within UCATT the party, not just the party, there was some people in the Labour party and I did organise them a good rank and file thinking group you know. We could argue, you know in my view when we had a full-time EC, which we haven't got now was if they didn't agree with something that you're doing get up and tell them, you don't hear that. Well, you used to go to a delegate conference and I went with the aim of tearing them apart. If something was wrong, getting it changed. If I go to the delegate conference that would be of the EC expecting a kick or saying to the delegates well I'm going to get a good kicking this week, you don't no more. I mean it might be different in other unions. *I think it runs across all unions.* The arguments, the debates. We don't have the debates like we used to when you were down there having a go and I was over here. And it's not good because even though we had flaming rows we used to go forward.

*Is that all to do with unions becoming much more professional and a bit divorced from their members, would you say that, I mean I don't know what the answer to that is, what do you think?* I mean, when I was, I mean you take me, when I was at work you know last year. I'd been on the EC I dunno 10 years I'd been at work, UCATT always felt I was on the EC because it's on their membership card, it's in the diary they get that used to be you know. And I was, they all said it, I was the most approachable person on there. I was easy to get hold of. I mean even managers I've represented on disciplinaries even they've said well I didn't think he'd do anything for me because of them and us but he helped me out. So I dunno, I mean I know I'm removed from it now to a degree but I still approach people at work you know if they want me they know how to get me, I think half the workforce has got me email address and I'm afraid they need to get me because what I'm saying is you know if he had an accident or a legal case that the local stewards weren't sure, they might go here, go and give Chris a ring. I dunno what it is Dave I mean.

MM: About officials? CM: No, we're talking about there don't seem to be much spirit or debate or argument you know. MM: I think it's because most people are frightened and think they've got more personal things, they've got a lot more to lose before we're at that point where we say enough you know. Through the trade union movement people have got a stake in all trade unions and we've reached a standard of living and we're all frightened of losing that standard of living so we, you know hold back, to keep our jobs and I think this recession has got to go a lot further, when people have actually lost those things. *JP: The trouble is they're going to lose those quick and they don't seem to realise yet.* If you think we're in a generation now of Thatcher's children and Thatcher's children have all grown up with this sod you Jack I'm alright, so they're not looking at the wider picture, they're only looking at their own little box, and to a degree we're all guilty of it. We're all frightened of losing what we've got but I think until it's like the thing with the pensions, I mean in the past when for manual workers, the support staff in schools have tried to improve things, teachers didn't want to know. Now their pensions are being hit, which is their future they're up in arms and that's what, it something that effects you know, that's just my opinion.



CM: But there's no point in the Labour party, I mean you had Milliband come out on Saturday in the *Guardian*, don't go on strike. JP: *If only his dad could have heard him.* Ed Balls before him and I don't think you know he ought to be involved in it, a strike or something like that. *He said something rude about it.* But what are you supposed to do when they've taken your pension away? Yeah, the movement's slow, it is. Brendan Barber was the only full-time like you know national figure I heard on the media, was on the news on the telly, saying the unions in 2008 agreed increases in local government pensions, which we did because I was party to that, and he increased the contributions excepted the low paid which was mainly part-time women school cleaners and school staff. *Everybody was told that was it.* Yeah, and a deal was done and it weren't the best deal in the world but we accepted it, most, I mean most where I worked there within Islington, grandiose slightly but it ain't too bad, can't pay more but you know. But I was the only guy who said that I've heard.

(?) *said it as well on Radio 4.* And I thought you idiot you know he's right but also while slagging the MPs, they've got, they ain't all in their schemes. So it's don't do as I do, do as I say, you know, and the prime minister, while having a go at Brown, when Brown was out as prime minister, he gets his prime minister's pension, the day he packed up he's still getting his MP's salary, he'll have been well pleased. I mean hypocrites, so we're all hypocrites. There was something in there about, it was something going to this new committee about MPs' salary and pensions, I think it's all junk, this little get up, go into this committee because on Friday they vote threw it away what the MPs are looking for, I can't remember all the details but basically it was to return what they got. I'd love a job if I could have one, love a job where I could get 80, 70,000 pound a year plus technical support, secretaries plus convention mileage over night, all this and I didn't have to go to work for it. It didn't matter if I went in or didn't go in I'd still get it all. Because that's what MPs get, you don't have to turn up.

*So the only thing to do now is we all have to become MPs or we have to revive rank and file as in the trade union movement.* Well, yeah, I think it'll happen, I mean, you know that old saying well what goes around comes around but what's in fashion you know in the 50s comes back in the 80s sort of. I don't know how long we've got to wait but. *It's called retro, it's very chic.* MM: I mean If you think about it although that the violence spoilt it there is some fight left out there in youngsters in demos of the students over the tuition fees. So it is there, it's just tapping it and stopping the violent element from I don't know putting other people off. You know because the students do another demonstration, there's a lot of students that would be put off because of that violence.

*Well and also because of the way it was reported because it was very peaceful, there was hardly any violence at all but it was reported like that, and I was on that demo because I'm the chair of the retired members from London for my union and nobody saw anything of any importance at all. I was just terribly thrilled that we had all those young people who'd never been, clearly they'd never been on anything before and they were all together doing something worth doing.*

CM: That demo was massive, I mean I didn't attend because I couldn't walk it but I went over on a bus with me dog and me walking stick and went up to some with their banners and chatted to a few people and I tried to get home but it nearly crippled but it was tremendous, 250,000, yeah, three quarters of a million you know it was, the Embankment was blocked from end to end. *Are you talking about the TUC thing?* Yeah. MM: No, I was talking about the students. CM: Oh yeah, well that was big. MM: So it is there, it just you got to find the thing that gets everyone.

DW: *I think we'll see it this Thursday as well, I think the pensions strikes will see more than we expect, I think we'll see a lot of solidarity.* JP: *But still in my union the retired members are allowed no rights at all, because although the people who I think it's the right wing and the so called left but I'm talking about the Socialist Workers here, who are the only union, they're big in mine and I feel very bitter and resentful about it, but the right wing and the left wing are saying oh no it doesn't count if it's a pension, it's not you know, if you're a retired member you have no real interest, well of course you have an interest you've already paid your money, but they don't seem to recognise because it's propaganda, they all say oh yes and you get a good pension at*

*the end of it but when you don't what's the point? I mean the amount of unpaid work that I did as a teacher was just startling, at least half of what I did was unpaid.*

MM: But at work, what's on the television where they say parents are meant to be you know up in arms over this, I mean we've got two grandchildren in school and it's going to be really inconvenient for my daughter, she works but she's you know, she's not angry at the teachers for going on strike because they've promised that they won't do it during exam time. *JP: Because that would spoil the kids chances for ever that.* MM: I know that's where they've got the most, but at least this time you know they're not doing it and I don't think Jen would say anything at all if they had more of them. *DW: Also the fact is that it's created at every school you've got parents talking about it, whereas before they weren't discussing it?* MM: What the press forgets is that a lot of the parents actually work in the schools because they can only get those jobs because they're mums, so it's a double whammy, you won't get many parents complaining.