

'Stoke is open for business' says new MP

Newly-elected Labour MP for Stoke Central, Tristram Hunt, came to Conference after being in the job for just a week, telling delegates he had not yet been sworn in at Westminster.

He said that the Labour Party in Stoke Central had been able to run a very effective campaign on the doorstep, beating back the BNP, thanks in part to

the help received from Unity. The MP said he was very excited about working closely with Unity over the next few years. "I'm enormously passionate about your industry and have already visited several factories, as well as meeting the BCC to talk about the problem of energy costs.

Together

"I want to let everyone know that Stoke is open for business. The challenges that confront the city are political rather than business-based, as I believe that you have been let down by political leadership at municipal and a higher level.

"Stoke's MPs have to work as a block, working together for the city, with much more coordination with local councillors to provide a united front."

He said that they should work together at Westminster



Tristram Hunt makes his first speech as an MP to a Unity conference.



General secretary Geoff Bagnall welcomes the newly-elected Labour MP.

"to protect the area against the strange coalition government we are now facing."

After admitting that people had a sense of being penalised for working hard, he said the failure of Labour to grasp the immigration issue had allowed space for the BNP.

On the election of a new Labour leader, he declared that the contest should be an open process, not just reserved for Labour MPs.

He finished by saying he was waiting to hear from Unity about how he could help the union and its members. "I am looking forward to receiving your executive's shopping list."

Problems of recruitment

The problems of keeping and recruiting members were highlighted by general secretary Geoff Bagnall during a debate on the union's future.

In answer to a question about how to keep members when they move jobs, he suggested that the way forward was to move to direct debit payments.

"Some of our members have been made redundant five or six times, so paying their contributions in this way will make it easier for them to retain their membership."

Mr Bagnall said that in the last 15 years the union had seen an orderly decline of the ceramics industry.

"During this time we have not always acted as a trade union to improve the terms and conditions of our members, but have spent a lot of our time in agreeing redundancy terms. People have seen that and say why should we be part of a trade union?"

"The workers we are finding the most difficult to recruit are young people, because of their lack of understanding and knowledge of trade unions and who see the benefits of no use to them.

"This, coupled with the fear factor of potential members, makes recruiting new members a very difficult and frustrating task, but one which we have to address."

Euro MP warns of 'interesting' times ahead

In a heartfelt speech to Conference, Euro MP Mike Cashman (pictured) recalled that the last time he was in Llandudno was in 1997, just after the election of the Blair government.

"What we are now seeing is a political landscape that for many people is simply unimaginable, with two parties that have so little in common being in coalition together. Tweedle Clegg and Tweedle Cam are a new form of Marxism - Groucho Marxism!

"They are people who have gone into power for the sake of power, but if you have no principles you have no moral compass to help you deal with problems. This is why I really fear what will happen."

He said that during its 13 years in power Labour did not get everything right, despite its many achievements.

"Amongst other innovations Labour gave you the legal right to belong to a trade union and

also brought in the minimum wage." Referring to the economic problems affecting Greece and the Euro zone, he said the new coalition government did not have a clear policy on Europe,

"As 60 per cent of our trade is with the Euro zone, there's an interesting period ahead of us."

He declared that his campaign, in conjunction with Unity, for the

introduction of a Mark of Origin on ceramics will continue. "I will stick in there at Brussels to try and make sure that a

