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CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department Response to "Government Deregulation Agenda Inquiry" - Health and Safety Legislation and Enforcement:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

The House of Commons Regulatory Reform Select Committee is carrying out an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Tory Government's deregulation agenda.

The scope of the Select Committee of MPs Inquiry will be to consider the Government's approach to reducing the burden on business and civil society of regulation, by examining the volume and breadth of regulations and burdens on business, the effectiveness of the regulatory framework within Government and the use of post-implementation reviews.

In line with well-established Conference Policy, the Health, Safety and Environment Department has submitted a response to the Inquiry's public consultation process, specifically on the 'negative' effects and impact of the deregulation agenda on health and safety at work and in general in the UK which prioritises business interests and profits over worker and public safety.

Our response concludes by making a number of recommendations, key to which is our call for an end to health and safety deregulation and instead that health and safety law enforcement is regenerated and reinforced as well as refocusing attention on industries like communications which were wrongly categorised as 'low risk' by the government as well as providing fit for purpose protection for vulnerable workers in the modern day, increasingly fragmented workplace. Additionally the CWU is calling for the current regulatory approach that put business interests and profits before worker and public safety to be ended and that Trade Unions Safety Reps are given new strengthened rights and powers and provided with increased involvement in health and safety decisions, including powers to stop work that presents an immediate danger.

In March 2016 the then Business Minister Sajid Javid told British Business Bosses that the government remains more committed than ever to 'cutting regulation and red tape' and reducing overall levels of regulation, telling the Bosses and Industry Moguls that the Tories had already cut £10 billion pounds worth of regulation 'red tape' but regulation remains too high and that the Tory Government is going to reduce the regulatory burden still further by cutting the cost of regulation by another £10 billion, as well as weakening the way statutory regulators enforce regulatory rules. He announced that in future, for every £1 pound of regulatory burden the government created, £3 pounds worth had to be removed!

In June 2017, the Grenfell Tower fire disaster occurred killing 71 people. Survivors stated that their repeated concerns about the risk of fire at the building in the months before the fatal blaze were simply "brushed away" by Kensington and Chelsea council officials. The Grenfell Tenants Action Group warned of "dangerous living conditions" and said: "It's a terrifying thought but only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of the Council.

Following the blaze Tory Prime Minister Theresa May said "there would be a thorough fire-safety regulation review of all buildings similar to Grenfell Tower".

In December 2017, Dame Judith Hackitt, former Chair of the UK Health and Safety Executive, and now the Chair of the independent review into building regulations and fire safety said she was "shocked" by some of the practices she had seen, calling for better enforcement to "hold to account those who try to cut corners." In her interim investigation report she stated that "A universal shift is required to significantly improve fire safety. The current system is not fit for purpose and government must address the 'shortcomings' identified."

A copy of the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department's submission to the Government Deregulation Agenda Inquiry is attached.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer