**Gail Cartmail - speech notes 19th April 2018**

**The future of the finance sector**

Colleagues,

Many thanks for inviting me to speak here today on behalf of Unite.

I want to start with four numbers;

* 200
* 3000
* 1200
* 59

By 2014 the top 20 biggest banks in the world had paid **£200 billion** in fines since 2008 – over scandals such as money laundering, rate-rigging, sanctions-busting and miss-selling subprime mortgages and bonds.

Since 2008 the biggest banks have closed more than **3,000** branches.

Leaving **1,200** local communities with no access to local banking facilities.

And **59 per cent** is the amount men in HSBC are paid on average more than women – one example in a sector where the gender pay gap is staggering.

In 2009 the Equality and Human Rights Commission warned that the finance sector had the largest equal pay gap.

The moment we are living in now needs to be a catalyst for change.

Unite, as the trade union representing workers across the financial services industry, has long argued for change – for the finance sector as a whole to wake up to it’s social responsibilities

- to its consumers,

- to its workforce,

- and to the broader economy and our society as a whole.

Brexit has merely served to demonstrate that change is overdue.

It is an opportunity to ask what finance sector **do** we want to see in the future?

And for Unite this very much sits alongside our broader aims of a society that is more equal, where the rewards of a growing economy are shared fairly, where all work is good work, with trade union rights and sectoral collective bargaining, and we have the public services that people deserve.

The finance sector has a central role to play in that.

Access to finance and banking must be the cornerstone of a fair and decent society for all.

We see a diverse, socially responsible UK banking and finance industry as the future.

* Less of the ‘too big to fail’

Instead,

* The re-building of the co-operative, mutuals and credit unions that we have seen eroded. Could this underpin a different model into supporting young people into secure housing?
* Banking provision rooted in our local communities that enables well trained, supportive staff to boost financial literacy and help people make sound financial judgements (things that machines can’t do!).

The seemingly weekly announcements of branch closures and abandoning local high streets and swathes of rural areas, job cuts and offshoring do nothing to boost the reputation of financial services.

We believe an urgent inquiry is needed into banking provision in our local communities – and the finance sector needs to hear what customers are telling them.

The uncertainty over the shape and details of Brexit must not be allowed to justify yet more branch closures or to further offshore support functions.

* And in building a new economy, we need supportive, patient provision for Small and Medium Enterprises.

It is appalling that banks had to be shamed into leniency towards businesses in the Carillion supply chain who were victims of the 90 day invoice scam.

Unite has long argued for the adoption of the Robin Hood Tax – a small tax on the finance sector generating up to £250 billion a year globally to fight poverty and climate change. We welcomed the Labour commitment to the financial transaction tax in its 2017 manifesto.

And of course, the success of delivering all of this is recognising and valuing the workers.

Over the last decade while workers on the frontline faced uncertainty and pay restraint pay ‘reward packages’ at the top have been soaring even though the banks continue to face massive financial penalties for misbehaviour.

And it is a workforce that is,

* Focused on customer service, highly skilled and predominantly long serving,
* Earning as little as £17,000 a year,
* Majority (60%) women, many working part-time because of their caring responsibilities.

And yet the sector is not responding to the needs to this workforce -

As one senior Unite finance sector workplace representative articulated:

“Women take time off to have children, and they never catch up in terms of career progression. Then they take time out to look after elderly dependents. There is inherent sexism in how that is dealt with. We try to get change, but men are holding the levers of power. We are expecting our oppressors to change the system – it’s like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas.”

Unite is championing improved mandatory reporting and clear plans for change across the sector.

The finance sector could, in the future, no longer be the example always used to highlight rampant inequality.

I will end by saying, as this session is about Brexit, that we cannot allow a vision for Brexit – for any of us – that brings further austerity and any attacks on our hard won worker and social rights.

That would undermine our ability to achieve the society, economy and finance sector of the future that we wish to see.

I look forward to the discussion.