



30th July 2009

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Christine Blower Headlines at Chainmakers' Festival**

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2009

General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, Christine Blower is to be the main speaker at the 2009 Women Chainmakers' Festival which returns for its fifth year at the Black Country Living Museum, Dudley on Saturday 12th September, 2009.

Blower, who was elected as Deputy General Secretary of the NUT in 1997 joined the union as a student and has been a career-long NUT member. She has held the post of President and Secretary of the NUT in Hammersmith and Fulham and had a 33 year career in teaching.

Christine Blower, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers said: "It is a great privilege to be speaking at this festival. The courage and determination shown by the women chainmakers to demand a decent living wage is a message that is as relevant today as it was nearly 100 years ago. The campaign to make the minimum wage a living must still go on."

Blower led a one day strike over teacher's pay in 2005, the first national strike by the union for over 20 years. She has also criticised government plans to fast track unemployed executives into teaching in six months.

The Women Chainmakers' Festival celebrates the pioneering work of the women Chainmakers of Cradley Heath through music, drama, dance, poetry and performance and 'flies the banner' for the historically important role of women within Britain's

working and industrial heritage.

The 1910 Women Chainmakers' dispute was a significant moment in labour history with hundreds of low paid women, earning pitiful wages for their work, successfully prosecuting a dispute which laid the foundations for today's National Minimum Wage.

Emma Middleton, Marketing Manager for the Black Country Living Museum said: “We are enormously pleased Christine Blower has agreed to speak at the 2009 festival. It is, we believe, a recognition of the importance of the women chainmakers' strike and the festival and raises the awareness of the role played by women worldwide in the workforce.”

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**Photo Opportunities**

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