ANDREW MARR:
The TUC’s annual congress is taking place in Bournemouth, and the Labour Leader Ed Miliband is promising a confrontation over union links with his party. Delegates will be debating other things, of course - wages, employment and the cost of living - but the hot topic for many will be the relationship between the union bosses and Miliband. Some leading union figures have been calling on him to apologise for accusing Unite of rigging candidate selection in Falkirk. Meanwhile, another union, the GMB, has slashed its funding to Labour by a million pounds. I’m joined now live from congress by Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite. Thank you for joining us, Mr McCluskey.

LEN McCLUSKEY:
Good morning.

ANDREW MARR:
You’re running a lot of campaigns in Unite at the moment, but the biggest one, I guess, is over zero hours. Can you hear me? Can you hear me alright?

LEN McCLUSKEY:
Unfortunately, Andrew, this is a very, very bad line. I think you were asking me about the situation in Falkirk. Obviously we’re delighted that we’ve been vindicated. Right along we said that Unite had done nothing wrong, and I'm pleased now that the Labour Party have actually indicated that no wrongdoing took place. And so it’s time for us to move on from Falkirk and make certain that we are involved in uniting the party so that we can move forward.

ANDREW MARR:
If Ed Miliband does press forward with plans to cut the old union link and encourage members to join as individuals, what’s going to happen, do you think?

LEN McCluskey:
Well I don’t think Ed Miliband is talking about cutting the union link. He’s made the point that he wants a new relationship with the unions; that 2013 is the time for us to re-evaluate and we need a different relationship from the one that we had in 1913. And that’s why Unite have welcomed the proposals. We actually don’t agree with the status quo. We want to engage in a proper debate and a discussion to see whether we can strengthen the relationship and make certain that we create a Labour Party that is on the side of ordinary working people.

ANDREW MARR:
You have something north of three million members. If they were encouraged to join as individuals, how many do you think would actually join the Labour Party?

LEN McCluskey:
I’m sorry, Andrew, I can’t hear you. This is a really, really bad line.

ANDREW MARR:
Okay, I’ll try again.

LEN McCluskey:
I mean I think I heard you …

ANDREW MARR:
Of your three million members …
LEN McCLUSKEY:
I think I heard you …

ANDREW MARR:
Of your three million members, how many do you think would join the Labour Party if they were given that opportunity?

LEN McCLUSKEY:
Well we’ll have to wait to see. Of course the important thing to understand - and you know lots of people fail to grasp this - is the relationship that we have with the Labour Party is on a collective basis. That’s what trade unions operate on - collectivism - and it’s important that people don’t try to [inaudible] collectivism to individualism. Although Ed’s hope is that tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of ordinary trade unionists will now actively engage with the Labour Party. We’d certainly support that and we’re going to be working enthusiastically to see if we can bring that about. But you know the challenge really for Ed is to make certain now that he demonstrates to ordinary working people and indeed to organised labour that the Labour Party is on their side; that the Labour Party is different from this Conservative Government and the path to poverty that they have us on is something that he’s going to oppose and he’s going to give hope to people - hope to the one million young people who haven’t got a job.

ANDREW MARR:
And if Unite had more influence on the party, if it was more of a Unite style Labour Party, what’s the policy differences that we would notice, do you think?

LEN McCLUSKEY:
I’m sorry, Andrew, I can’t hear you. It’s just a terrible, terrible line. Again I …

ANDREW MARR:
Well I’m sorry to everybody. We’re having severe technical difficulties - including the weather, I can see - so we’re going to leave it there for a moment. Thank you.
INTERVIEW ENDS