

GMB

CONGRESS 2022

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**BARBARA PLANT
(President)
(In the Chair)**

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Held in:

**Harrogate Convention Centre,
King's Road, Harrogate HG1 5LA**

on:

**Sunday, 12th June 2022
Monday, 13th June 2022
Tuesday, 14th June 2022
Wednesday, 15th June 2022
and
Thursday, 16th June 2022**

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**PROCEEDINGS
DAY FOUR
(Wednesday, 15th June 2022)**

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**(Transcript prepared by:
Marten Walsh Cherer Limited,
2nd Floor, Quality House,
6-9 Quality Court, Chancery Lane,
London WCF2A 1HP.
Telephone: 020 7067 2900.
email: info@martenwalshcherer.com)**

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FOURTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY, 15TH JUNE 2022
MORNING SESSION
(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, Congress. Welcome back everyone to the last full day of Congress. Before we start, can I remind you, once again, either to switch your devices off or make sure they are on silent.

Before we go to the Standing Orders Report, let me remind everyone that we have a whole day full of motions. I want to remind you of the debating order on the right of reply. This applies to everybody. A mover of a motion has the right of reply if a delegate speaks against that motion. A mover of a motion does not have the right of reply to a CEC speaker. That is simply because the CEC stance is shared with delegations in advance and movers and seconders of motions, therefore, have the opportunity to respond to the CEC position at the start of the debate. I wanted to make that clear to everybody.

I also ask delegates to speak respectfully to venue staff. I have had a complaint. Look, we are GMB. We live our values of dignity and respect. Thank you.
(Applause)

Congress, there are a few changes to your published agenda. I will, first, invite Jan Smith, National Secretary of the Retired Members' Association – the RMA – to speak.

We will also be hearing two emergency motions today. Emergency Motion 1 on Airports will be heard after the Cost of Living Statement. I am hoping that we will also be able to debate Emergency Motion 2 on Rwanda before lunch, but this business may be moved into the afternoon depending on how we do.

There are a large number of motions this morning, and if the order of business does change, then I will let you know in advance. At this point, I call Jan Smith to speak.

RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION

JAN SMITH (National President, Retired Members Association): President and Gary, I am Jan Smith, National Secretary of the Retired Members Association, known as the RMA.

Congress, I can report that last year we were able to have our national conference. It was held by zoom, and our speakers on that occasion were Gary. He stopped his car. He was en-route to a funeral. Thank you, Gary. We heard from Barbara, and Steve Kemp. He stopped eating his fish and chips in Whitby to give us a talk. (Applause)

Sadly, this year's conference, which was going to be held in October, has been cancelled, the same as other conferences have been cancelled. But between going through from last year, our National Co-ordinator, Steve Kemp, retired, and Jude Brimble came into the fold. Jude had lots of ideas and ways and means of taking us forward. Unfortunately, since March we have not had a national co-ordinator

because Jude went off sick and she has now retired. But I thank you, Jude, for all that you did in that interim period and I wish you a long and happy retirement. Let me say in the interim, Steve, welcome back, it was a short retirement.

Last year at Congress, albeit was by zoom, we made history. For the first year our National Banner took part in the Banner Parade. Unfortunately and sadly, it could not happen this year, so, please, get our National Banner back within the other regional banners. We are a national group and we are not one to be put down.

As to life membership, I am still getting calls from people in all regions, who say: "I am retiring on such-and-such a date. Can you tell me how do I stay in the Union?" The best thing forward, in some instances, is that they send the details. I give sincere thanks to Jill Rye and Lisa Folwell of my London Region. They forward details on about retaining those members. Colleagues, I am doing a lot of work for you. Although I may not be in your region, I am working in the background. *(Applause)*

This year we have managed to get our stall back and, by having our stall, I sincerely thank those regions which have donated prizes for our raffle, and also to you who have bought the raffle tickets. At some stage, today that raffle will take place. I can tell you, up to last night, on a rough calculation, we have made £930. *(Applause)* Thank you all very, very much.

Finally – I will ask if Gary can come and join me, please – sitting down the front we have a young lady by the name of Pat Gannon. *(The General Secretary laughed intently)*. He knew nothing about it, Pat. She has been a brick. To Andy Pendergast, we've got Steve back so you can stop tearing your hair out when she says "RMA". Pat, I have a small token here which Gary will present to you on behalf of the RMA to thank you, kindly, for everything you have done. I can tell you that there are many a day that she rings up and says, "Jan, can you ring me back?" Pat, we fully appreciate all your hard work in keeping us going. *(Presentation made amidst applause)*

I've got another small token. Sitting in the front is our honorary President, Monica Smith. *(Applause)* Monica was at the forefront of the RMA for many, many years. She is still there and she is still active. I took her place as the National Secretary. So, Monica, Gary will come down and present you with this small gift to say thank you in appreciation for all that you have done. *(Presentation made amidst applause)*

Colleagues, last but not least, I would like to give sincere thanks to everybody who supports the RMA, especially to my Region, to Warren Kenny, my Regional Secretary. He stood in and acted when he took over as acting General Secretary, looking after the RMA. But in the interim, if I had any problem, him and his staff assisted and guided me in the right direction. I give sincere thanks to London Region for all their help and support. *(Applause)*

I also give thanks to my husband, Colin, who sits right at the back on his mobility scooter. Many a time he said, "I'm going to cut that bloody telephone wire before long". Colin, thank you. Love you lots. *(Applause)*

Colleagues, please accept my report. Continue to enjoy Congress. Have a safe journey home and God bless you all. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. I am glad to see that you are keeping the General Secretary on his toes this morning. Thank you for everything you do for the retired members. We learn so much from them. Thank you. *(Applause)*

We now move on to Employment Policy: Rights at Work and Motions 99 and 100.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK
AGENCY WORKERS RECEIVING GRATITUDE PAYMENTS
MOTION 99

99. AGENCY WORKERS RECEIVING GRATITUDE PAYMENTS

This Congress calls for employers to recognise agency workers when they are engaged for service with the employer after the 12-week period or longer for any type of gratitude payments that full-time staff may benefit from, especially where our members have worked tirelessly through the pandemic side by side with the full-time employees of the companies.

We are looking for changes to the Agency Workers Directive to include any special payments and other benefits that maybe presented to full time employees, so as to be treated with fairness and equality.

ISLINGTON 1 & HARINGEY BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

JOSHUA WADE (London): Good morning everyone. Before I begin, I want to say a quick thank you as well to my region and to Congress as a whole for the excellent speeches and for making me feel so welcome here. I am from the London Region. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you.

I am moving Motion 99 on Agency Workers Receiving Gratitude Payments. The background to this motion is that after lockdown Islington Council made a special payment to frontline permanent staff who worked throughout the pandemic in areas such as refuge, recycling, collection crews, HGV drivers, caretakers, care workers and school bus drivers. They called this a “gratitude payment”. However, we discovered that this payment was not made to agency workers covering those exact same roles. As this payment was called a “gratitude payment”, it was not classed as a bonus or enhancement pay, which agency workers would normally get, despite the fact that agency workers in Islington get overtime, night-rate payments and they also receive vouchers of recognition, such as “Caretaker of the month”. Of course, when we raised this matter with the council, they refused to pay the agency workers this payment as they said they were not technically their employees. The first thing is we find that a bit rich, as without those workers covering these exact same jobs over the pandemic, many of our essentially public services simply wouldn’t have run. So it seems that they were good enough to work but not good enough for rewards.

Congress, we need a change in legislation covering agency workers as this is a loophole the council has played with simply by the wording of the statement on the payments. These workers should be thanked properly and treated with fairness and equality, especially as many of them have been working for the council for 12 weeks,

regardless of the risks they faced working during the lockdown and the pandemic. Congress, please support this motion and our agency workers. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joshua. Seconder?

ANTHONY DUNCAN (London): Good morning, President. I am delighted to second Motion 99 and congratulations to Josh for his speech. I also have the pleasure of representing the London Region.

When I was invited to second this motion, I have to be honest and say that I did not a clue what the Agency Workers Directive 2010 was but, you know, enthusiasm takes over from common sense. But I did bother to read it. In essence, it's a good directive. It provides security and opportunities. However, this directive is 12 years old and when you think of how employment has changed over that period of time, it is now that we need to recognise that we need to revisit, relook and re-evaluate the value that we give to agency workers wherever they work.

The agency workers, regardless of their time of employment, are denied access to some fundamental additional payments, either financial or in kind. These can include no access to creche facilities. It also says that if you are lucky enough to work for an employer who has a gym facility, they are denied that access. They don't receive any remuneration if there are reduced meals and, certainly in the National Health Service, where I work, there is absolutely no chance that they would get subsidised parking either. They are also denied access to training. So we need to change this. We need to bring this back to the modern world. Therefore, I am delighted to support Josh and I'm delighted to support the London Region in supporting this important motion that sends out a clear message that it doesn't matter, you're all important, you're all equal and let's treat everybody the same. Thank you for listening. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. I call the mover of Motion 100.

SUPPORT CASUAL WORKERS

MOTION 100

100. SUPPORT CASUAL WORKERS

This Congress believes that Casual workers who have provided their services for two years should be offered a permanent contract.

Congress notes this issue has become common practice in some Local Authorities and with some employers. With the current increase to inflation this is causing enormous anxiety to some of our members who do not have a fixed or minimum number of contracted working hours. In these changing times we need to ensure employers identify those casual staff and offer them a permanent contract. We are calling upon Trade Unions, MP's, Councillors to support this motion

L26 LB WANDSWORTH BRANCH

Southern Region

(Carried)

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): President and Congress, I am a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* This Congress believes that casual workers who have provided their

services for two years should be offered a permanent contract, whether part-time or flexi. Congress notes that this issue has become common practice in some local authorities and with some employers. With the current increase in inflation this is causing enormous anxiety to some of our members who do not have a fixed or minimum number of contracted working hours. In these changing times, we need to ensure employers identify those casual staff and offer them a permanent contract. We are calling upon trade unions, MPs and councillors to support this motion.

I have been a casual worker for the last 12 years with a local authority, initially the backbone of the service and at the forefront, but during the lockdown of 2020 and 2021 all work ceased and we casual workers had to ask about pay, sick pay and annual leave at every change the Government made from the outset. Once the return to work began, changes were made and no more virtual work was available. Casual workers were informed that we had a month to find other employment. We would no longer be required as permanent staff were going to cover the service as per their contracts. This situation did not last long and we were soon called upon, as usual, to the rescue.

Casual workers, many having been utilised for well over two years, have never been offered a permanent contract, terms and conditions or employment rights first-hand. Conversations took place in 2013 but no action followed. I feel I have been abused and made to feel under-valued, discriminated against and blatantly treated less favourably than permanent workers, who have been entitled to performance-related pay when working for less hours.

I have, as a result of Covid, been diagnosed with long Covid and emphysema COPD. I am unable to return to work, not that management has bothered to check on me. If I were a permanent member of staff, however, this would have been standard as I would be getting sick pay and probably going over the agreed timescale.

I ask Congress, in conclusion, for the GMB to support this motion and ensure that all policies are updated to reflect the long-term use of casual workers, as soon as is practicable. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maria. Secunder?

SONYA DAVIS (Southern): Congress, I am seconding Motion 100: Support Casual Workers. I fully support this extremely important motion. In our place of work, casual workers have been used and abused during the pandemic. However, once the restrictions had been lifted, it was back to business as usual.

Our concern is that the majority of these workers have been utilised over a number of years. Well, at least a minimum of two years, which enables permanent employees employment rights. Our branch is supporting these workers by requesting this specific information from the employer. However, this is not enough.

Congress, we need a policy in place to ensure that casual workers are not misused by the employer. These employees who have been used on a casual basis for a number of years should be entitled to more favourable terms and conditions. Casual

employment should be deemed as solely “casual” and, as stated on the gov.uk website, should be used occasionally and not for years.

Conference, we urge your support with this motion to ensure that policies are put in place to support our casual workers. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sonya. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? (*No response*) No. In that case, I ask June Minnery to respond for the CEC.

JUNE MINNERY (CEC): Good morning, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motion 99. The CEC is supporting Motion 99 with the qualification that we may not be able to seek to amend the EU Agency Workers’ Directive. However, we can seek to amend the UK’s position, which implemented the EU Directive so they can go further than what is already established. We can also seek to reverse existing case law with the qualification that we are not able to amend the Directive.

The CEC is, therefore, asking Congress to support Motion 99 with the qualification set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, June. Does London Region accept the qualification to Motion 99? (*Agreed*) Motion 100 is supported by the CEC. So I will put both motions to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? They are both carried.

Motion 99 was CARRIED.

Motion 100 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Employment Policy: Rights at Work. I will take the mover of Motion 105.

WORKERS’ RIGHTS TO SICK PAY

MOTION 105

105. WORKERS’ RIGHTS TO SICK PAY

This Congress calls on the CEC to launch a campaign to improve the rights of workers for a better statutory sick pay.

Since the start of the Pandemic there is a move by some large employers to reduce or restrict company sick pay, this is a violation of workers’ terms and conditions.

Employers making inexcusable changes to its rules on sick pay to employees who have not been vaccinated are breaching fundamental rights, they might have personal problems relating to not being vaccinated, younger females who have concerns over fertility problems and pregnancy, and ethnic groups are being penalised for their beliefs.

We want to make amendments to the compulsory statutory sick pay, and this includes all employers, no matter how many employees there are on the company pay roll, to claim a refund from the Government.

W87 WIGAN BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

JOE SMITH (North West & Irish): President, Congress and General Secretary, the Government have moved the goal posts many times on Covid and not for the better. By 1st June of this year, a total of 19,957 deaths were recorded in just Yorkshire and Humberside. There were 1,846 deaths in the City of Leeds, and 155,000 deaths in England. That is not counting the rest of the UK.

The Government might be ignoring this dreaded disease but the disease is not going anywhere. We must all live with it and we must always be on the alert at all times.

There are 6.5 million disabled people in the UK and many have no contractual rights to sick pay. Congress, the right to sick pay has been eroded since the first lockdown. It is now time for the UK Government to introduce a proper fair sick pay scheme where workers' rights to sick pay are enshrined in legislation.

At the present time, employers can, if they want, withdraw from negotiated sick pay schemes and even avoid paying statutory sick pay. We want to see the Government take responsibility for the health workers, not only through the NHS but through the pay packets.

Congress, the payment of SSP should be refundable through the PAYE system to the employer. In doing so, workers will be protected. The Government wants to tax more and cut benefits. It does not hold employers to the task when they refuse to uphold current legislation. Look at the P&O mess, as an example.

Employers in the UK can ignore the current legislation on SSP and find ways under the current arrangement for not paying SSP. I support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joe. Secunder?

JOHN ALAN MERCER (North West & Irish): I second Motion 105: Sick Pay. I am going to take the role of a manager and the Government. "You're off sick. You ain't getting nothing!" That's the attitude they've got.

Statutory sick pay actually went up recently. It went up from £96.35 a week to £99.35 a week. When I have my milk delivered at the door, that increase doesn't get me six bottles of milk, so it's not going to go very far, is it?

The right to sick pay has been eroded. I pulled up the information on statutory sick pay. There are all sorts of things there, such as employment contracts and all the different things. You need to be earning £123 a week before you're even entitled to statutory sick pay, which takes a lot of people away from receiving statutory sick pay from certain jobs because many people these days are not doing one job but lots of little jobs and they are not making a lot of money. I believe that we need a proper rate of statutory sick pay that will support people. I know that if I only had £100 a week, I think I'd be living in a tent in someone's back garden, if I was lucky.

I want to second this motion. Comrades, let's enjoy Congress and hope we can change things for the better. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. I call the mover of Motion 106.

MANDATORY SICK PAY FOR ALL MOTION 106

106. MANDATORY SICK PAY FOR ALL

This Congress will be well aware that during the Covid-19 pandemic it came to light that not all care workers received full pay if off sick as a result of being tested positive with Covid-19. They would only be entitled to statutory sick pay of only £96 a week which left them short of hundreds of pounds whilst isolating.

When the GMB highlighted this and ran a campaign to get them full pay it unearthed the shocking truth of how many workers across the UK are in the same group as the care workers.

It's sad to say but those desperate to feed their families, pay their mortgages and bills on only £96 a week would still attend work to make their ends meet. This is known as presenteeism which is where an employee will come to work because they simply need the money and cannot afford to take time off due to illness.

Moreover, this can lead to a workplace epidemic whilst working contagiously. With the lessons we as a nation have learned about spreading diseases these last few years it's about time, we put to bed the worries of those who are unlucky not to have full sick pay available to them and make it mandatory for them to be awarded sick pay equivalent to their normal wage.

This would be a huge plus to help reduce the spread of uncontrollable diseases/illnesses throughout the population and lead to better health and productivity just to name a few benefits to employees and their employers. We call upon this conference for the GMB union to carry out a survey on sick pay and to run a campaign to fight for **Mandatory Sick Pay** for all equivalent to their basic pay.

RIPON & THIRSK BRANCH Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

NEIL LOCKWOOD (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President and Congress, I am the branch secretary of R75, Ripon & Thirsk General, moving Motion 106: Mandatory Sick Pay For All.

This Congress will be well aware that during the Covid-19 pandemic it came to light that not all care workers received full pay if off sick as a result of being tested with positive Covid-19. They would only be entitled to statutory sick pay of only £99 pounds a week, which left them short of hundreds of pounds whilst isolating.

When the GMB highlighted this and ran a campaign to get them full pay, it unearthed the shocking truth of how many workers across the United Kingdom are in the same group as the care workers. It's sad to say but those desperate to feed their families,

pay their mortgages and bills on only £90 a week would still attend work to make their ends meet. This is known as presenteeism which is where an employee will go to work because they simply need the money and cannot afford to take time off due to illness.

Moreover, this could lead to a workplace epidemic whilst working contagiously. With the lessons we as a nation have learned about spreading diseases these last few years, it's about time we put to bed the worries of those who are unlucky not to have full sick pay available to them. We must try to make it mandatory for those to be awarded sick pay equivalent to their normal wage. This would be a huge plus to help reduce the spread of uncontrollable diseases and illnesses throughout the population and lead to better health and productivity just to name a few benefits to employees and their employers. We call upon this conference for the GMB union to carry out a survey on sick pay and to run a campaign to fight for mandatory sick pay for all equivalent to their basic pay. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Neil. The seconder, please?

SARAH SHEEHAN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second Motion 106: Mandatory Sick Pay for All. During the on-going Covid pandemic, sick pay of £99.35 a week shows the utter contempt for those who care and care for our elderly and most vulnerable. GMB's campaign exposed the heart-breaking truth that many employees had no choice but to come to work whilst unwell. That was simply because trying to live on basic sick pay would cause severe financial hardship, subsequently resulting in a damaging impact on an employee's on-going health, well-being and financial stability. Many GMB members are subjected to this callous, insensitive and paltry amount of sick pay. It is immoral, reprehensible and unjustifiable, especially at a time when workers are obviously at their most vulnerable and the cost of living has escalated out of all proportion compared to income.

This motion calls for the GMB Union to campaign for mandatory sick pay for all, equivalent to an employee's basic pay. This is morally and ethically right and proper as GMB activists to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. I call the mover of Motion 107.

SICK PAY SHOULD EQUALLY APPLY TO ALL
MOTION 107

107. SICK PAY SHOULD EQUALLY APPLY TO ALL

Congress notes that some rogue employers have discriminated against staff who have not been covid vaccinated when paying sick pay. They have paid sick pay to staff who have been vaccinated, but not to staff who have not been vaccinated.

Congress encourages covid vaccination, and we acknowledge that the high levels of vaccination in the UK have been a success story, and a vital achievement in combating the corona virus.

However, Congress also notes that many individuals have reasons which are important to them as individuals for not being vaccinated. Many individuals who have not been vaccinated worked

through the worst stages of the pandemic, often in essential front-line roles which put them at risk, and employers were quite happy to allow them to put themselves at risk at that stage. Congress believes that employers seeking to discriminate against unvaccinated staff are motivated more by their own profitability than they are by public health concerns.

Congress further believes that discriminating between employees for sick pay based upon health choices outside of work is a dangerous slippery slope. What next? Employers refusing sick pay to staff who smoke, or drink, or drive motorbikes, or play contact sport?

Congress resolves to oppose discrimination over sick pay, and raise awareness of this issue.

W15 WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON BRANCH Southern Region

(Carried)

MARTHA DE BRUXELLES (Southern): President and Congress, I move Motion 107: Sick Pay Should Equally Apply to All.

Congress notes that some rogue employers have discriminated against staff who have not been Covid vaccinated when paying sick pay. They have paid sick pay to staff who have been vaccinated, but not to staff who have not been vaccinated. That is an unjust policy, as we have been talking this morning about sick pay.

Congress encourages Covid vaccination, and we should continue to do so, and we acknowledge that the high levels of vaccinations in the UK have been a success story, and a vital achievement in combating the Corona virus. We have continued and encouraged our members and supported them in their decisions to get vaccinated or not.

However, Congress also notes that many individuals have reasons which are important to them as individuals for not being vaccinated, and we should respect that, too. Many individuals who have not been vaccinated worked throughout the worst stages of the pandemic, often in essential front-line roles which put them at a greater risk than anybody else. Employers were quite happy to allow them to put themselves at risk at that stage, but did not do anything at all.

Congress believes that employers seeking to discriminate against unvaccinated staff are motivated solely by their own profitability than they are by public health concerns.

Congress further believes that discriminating between employees for sick pay based upon health choices outside of work is a dangerous and slippery policy. If we allow this to happen, what is going to happen next? Will employers refuse to pay sick pay to staff who smoke, for those who drive motorbikes or play contact sports? This needs to be stopped. The moment that we allow this continue it will certainly set a precedent. Congress resolves to oppose discrimination over sick pay, and raise awareness of this issue. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Martha. Secunder?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Congress, I am seconding Motion 107. Comrades, let me tell you a story about a young man I met on the picket line. He worked for Hills Waste in Wiltshire. He is a loader earning piss-poor money, to be honest, pardon my French. He told me a story that during the pandemic he had been working – remember, this was at a time right at the early stages of the pandemic – without gloves or protective equipment. They had no masks or hand sanitizers. Crucially, we did not even know how dangerous the disease was or how it was spread at that stage. They were working two, three or four up in the cabs of the wagons, putting themselves at risk for Covid because they were doing key work. We, obviously, respect the heroism of those key workers, but let's not forget that the Hills family, who privately own that company, were trousering profits out of the risks that our members were taking. Low and behold, he did catch Covid.

Roll on a year or so. He gets the chance of vaccination but he decides not to take it. He has already had Covid. He feels he's got a natural immunity and he makes a decision not to be vaccinated. It doesn't matter whether you agree with him or not because it is none of your business. It is none of my business and it is none of his employer's business. But what they said when he caught Covid was that they were not going to pay him sick pay. This is absolutely terrible.

I believe in the value of working, because it gives you self-respect, you are part of society and you have money. But when we go to work, you sell them your time and your skills. You don't sell them your personal beliefs, your choice about how to live your life. Comrades, we don't live just to work. It is absolutely wrong for employers to penalise people for the lifestyle choices they make that are completely legal. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. I call the mover of Composite 7 from London Region.

LIVING WAGE & STATUTORY SICK PAY COMPOSITE 7

C7. Living Wage & Statutory Sick Pay

Covering Motions 108 and 110

108. SICK PAY - LONDON REGION

110. LIVING WAGE STATUTORY SICK PAY - BIRMINGHAM & WEST MIDLANDS REGION

This Congress asks the union to ensure SSP is in line with the living wage.

The tragedy of the pandemic has revealed failed to see the crisis of sick pay for many thousands of workers in particular in the private sector.

According to a report by the TUC 267,800 workers in private firms were self-isolating without decent sick pay or any sick pay at all in mid-December. Almost 210,000 workers had to rely on statutory sick pay and 57,900 got no sick pay at all, said the report.

£96.35 a week means currently staff are forced to work when unwell, otherwise they can't afford basic necessities.

From the outset of the pandemic Matt Hancock admitted he couldn't live on the £96.35 p.w. statutory sick pay amount.

This lack of decent sick pay available for all, forces workers to choose between putting food on the table or self-isolating for their own, their families and the community's health. A choice no one should be forced to make.

The pandemic has only highlighted the issue that has prevailed for vast swathes of workers in the UK under our neoliberal model.

The figures are startling-the UK has the least generous statutory sick pay in Europe, worth £96.35 per week – around 15% of average earnings, compared to an OECD average of over 60% – and is only available to employees earning £120 a week or more, meaning two million workers, mostly women, do not qualify.

Making SSP match the living wage, for your contracted/average working hours would change the lives of so many workers, especially those on minimum wage and low incomes.

Congress demands that the GMB spearhead a movement wide campaign to right the wrong of the sick pay scandal.

Once a plan is in place, Congress instructs the CEC to liaise with Parliamentary Labour Party GMB Group to raise this in Parliament and report back to Congress.

Congress demands

1. Remove lower earnings limit so everyone has access to sick pay - 2m don't have access at the moment because they don't earn enough
2. Statutory sick pay to be paid at least level of the 'real' living wage - currently £96.35 a week, would raise it to at least £320 a week

These are only the first steps of a campaign to address and win for all workers in all types of employment full sick pay bringing finally some dignity and respect at work ending the scandal of workers having to make the choice they now face in the pandemic.

Moving Region: LONDON

Seconding Region: BIRMINGHAM & W MIDLANDS

(Carried)

ROBERT WHEELER (London): Congress, I move Composite 7. Congress, the greatest scandal in the British workplace is low pay, but an even greater scandal is low pay and inadequate sick pay, or in some cases no sick pay at all. Statutory sick pay is one of the greatest offenders in this respect, as workers earning less than £120 a week are not entitled to statutory sick pay. During the last two years, SSP has gone from £95.85p to £96.35 and now it is £99.35p a week. It's still not enough to live on. So it needs to be increased by the real living wage.

The pandemic has highlighted the issue and the fact that low-paid workers are plunged into poverty or forced into work when they are unfit to do so.

A TUC report, published in December 2021, says that the UK has the least generous statutory sick pay in Europe, which means that low-income workers who are forced to self-isolate but unable to work at home receive no sick pay or wages at all. This is a disgrace, and we need to stop employers giving workers unacceptable sick-pay increases or none, and forcing our colleagues to continue working when they are frequently too unwell to do so. Many workers on statutory sick pay are not able to feed their families, so we are asking for the lower-earning earnings limit to be removed so that everyone can access a decent pay when sick.

We need a campaign for a full and fair sick pay provision for all. Please support.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Robert. Seconder?

YVONNE THOMAS (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress and President, I am seconding Composite 7. Today we are asking the GMB to fight for sick pay to be paid at the national living wage level. For workers in low-paid or insecure work, the current £99.35p weekly rate of statutory sick pay means that most people are forced to work when they are ill. I'll say that again! In 2022 the lack of decent statutory sick pay means that people are going to work when they are sick. To make matters worse, the three day wait until you can claim statutory sick pay can put workers off even further.

For care workers who work three 12-hour shifts in an average full-time position, this literally can be the choice between going to work ill or missing a full week's pay. Congress, we are living in the worst economic crisis in 30 years. Bills are going up, rents are at an all-time high, petrol costs have increased so much that people are struggling even to get to work. This motion is vital in ensuring that no one has to choose between paying their rent or taking the time to get better when sick. Congress, please support this motion and ensure that all workers are valued and protected at work, as they should be. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Yvonne. I call the mover of Motion 109.

SICK PAY
MOTION 109

109. SICK PAY

This Congress calls on the CEC to instigate a campaign that will ensure that Paid Sick Leave is placed firmly on the union's negotiating agenda with employers.

We have witnessed the fact that workers suffering from Covid have struggled to stay at home while only receiving the measly amount of £96.35 per week.

We can campaign alongside other unions to raise the level of SSP but we must ensure that the GMB prioritises paid contractual sick leave in each and every negotiation where our members rely on the state sick pay.

**GMB ORGANISING BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region**

(Carried)

AMJAD SATTI (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am the branch secretary of B25 Bradford District Care Trust. I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

I am moving Motion 109 on statutory sick pay. SSP was slightly increased in April 2022 to £99.35 from £96.35 per week as stated in the preliminary agenda.

We have witnessed the fact that workers suffered from Covid and other long-term sickness to stay at home while only receiving the measly amount of £99.35 per week. This dilemma and fear of "Can't afford to be ill" has always existed for many workers across the sectors. There was evidence of this through Covid where workers attended work and were spreading the disease amongst other colleagues. How anyone can be

expected to live on £99.35 a week is beyond belief. It was even more evident across the private social care sector during the past couple of years. While many of us are in a position of not fearing a drop in income in the event of illness because of the contractual rights that we have fought for and won to cushion against the damage that illness can inflict financially, you have to imagine the £9.50 minimum wage per hour! For 37 and-a-half hours per week, you will earn around £311 after deductions in comparison to £99.35 SSP. Applauding will not compensate for the £211 shortfall.

This Congress recognises that many of us here and our members will have faced unimaginable hardship and uncertainty having to rely on food banks to survive on. This Congress also acknowledges that the cost of living has rocketed and the struggle it causes our members at work. We can campaign and leave other unions to raise the level of statutory sick pay, but we must ensure that GMB prioritises paid contractual sick leave in each and every negotiation where our members rely upon the statutory sick pay. Now, comrades, we need to pull together again as many here have sick pay terms and must not revert back to SSP.

This Congress calls on the CEC to instigate a national campaign that will ensure that paid sick leave is placed firmly on the union's negotiating agenda with employers. We call on the GMB Union to launch a national campaign for full sick pay equivalent to a living wage at the earliest opportunity, that GMB makes loud and public statements condemning employers who allow their employees to face poverty in the event of illness. We ask that it becomes GMB policy for all pay and terms and conditions of work to commence with a survey of members as soon as possible. If the members call for sick pay to be included in negotiations, then the full weight of the Union must be put behind such a campaign and all means necessary are utilised to support our members to free themselves from the archaic scenario of not being able to survive if ill at work. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. I always think it is difficult for first-time speakers who have to wait for several days before they make their speech. Well done. I know how difficult that is. I call the seconder.

RICHARD WILLETTS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am a GMB rep of B25 Bradford NHS Branch, and a proud Yorkshire & North Derbyshire member. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I second Motion 109 on statutory sick pay.

We call upon this Congress for the GMB to lobby this Government for an increase in statutory sick pay to the living wage as soon as possible. The pandemic has put the alarming inadequacies of statutory sick pay on centre stage and firmly under our spotlight. We have heard in many speeches this week the phrase "Heat or eat"! Our members struggle to make ends meet and they struggle to survive. It comes to a point when our members have to decide if they should eat or heat and turn to food banks up and down the country to feed themselves and their families.

However, Congress is grateful to the staff at the food banks who provide this valuable service during these difficult times and also their donors. Imagine how an individual can bear the living costs of paying towards rent and food every week on statutory sick pay. What about the utility bills, council tax, phone bills and other bills. The list can

go on and on. This issue must be included in a negotiation on pay, terms and conditions. If carried forward, members would be able to survive when off work through illness. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Richard. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? *(No response)* No. In that case, I call Rachel Hookway to respond for the CEC.

RACHEL HOOKWAY (CEC): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motions 105, 106, Composite 7 and Motion 109.

The CEC is supporting Motion 105 with qualifications. The CEC condemns the practice of employers refusing to pay sick pay for unvaccinated staff. Our first qualification is that the primary solution to sick pay is that it is the obligation of the employer to have a decent contractual sick pay scheme. If they cannot, then they should be paying statutory sick pay without any discrimination.

The CEC is also wary about campaigning for the state to underwrite statutory sick pay payments for the employer without wider reforms. This could let employers off the hook for not paying sick pay and it would ultimately be the taxpayer who subsidises the employer.

The CEC wishes to support Motion 106 with qualifications. Firstly, instead of a campaign to set mandatory sick pay at a rate equivalent to basic pay, the Union may, instead, wish to look at the overall pay of a worker. This is so that workers do not see a drop in their average earnings.

Secondly, the motion also calls for a survey on sick pay. The Union may wish to target low-paying employers who only offer statutory sick pay rather than survey members with sick pay that exceeds that amount.

The CEC is supporting Composite 7 with a qualification. The composite calls for statutory sick pay to be set in line with the living wage and sets a monetary value at such a rate. This rate would equate to £10 an hour based on a 32-hour week. The CEC's qualification is that linking statutory sick pay to the living wage would need to be consistent with what GMB considers to be a real living wage. The CEC also recognises that living costs are higher in some areas of the country. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to set statutory sick pay at a real living wage rate or a proportion of earnings, whichever is higher.

The CEC is supporting Motion 109 with a qualification. The motion calls for a campaign to ensure that paid sick leave is placed firmly on the Union's negotiating agenda with employers. Our qualification is that our efforts must be targeted and member driven as part of their own claims. Congress is not the right body to set out the details of individual pay claims.

Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 105, 107, Composite 7 and Motion 109 with the qualifications that I have set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rachel. Motion 107 is supported by the CEC. Does North West & Irish Region accept the qualification to Motion 105? (*Agreed*) Thank you. They do accept the qualification. Does Yorkshire & North Derbyshire accept the qualification to Motion 106? (*Agreed*) They do accept the qualification to Motion 106. Does London accept the qualification on Composite 7? (*Agreed*) Does Birmingham? (*Agreed*) Thank you. They agree these qualifications. Does Yorkshire accept the qualification to Motion 109? (*Agreed*) They accept the qualification. Thank you.

I will put all those motions to the vote: 107, 105, 106, Composite 7 and 109. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? They are carried.

Motion 107 was CARRIED.

Motion 105 was CARRIED.

Motion 106 was CARRIED.

Composite 7 was CARRIED.

Motion 109 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I have an apology to make. Yesterday at Congress, apparently, we happened to miss a vote on Motion 136: More Truck Stops Needed Urgently, from London Region. Thank you London Region and Midland & East Coast for bringing this to our attention. My apologies. I am human. Malcolm is human. We all make mistakes. We do not need to hear the motion again as we did debate it. The CEC is supporting this motion. I just need to put that motion to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 136: More Truck Stops Needed Urgently! please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 136 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We can now debate Motion 184 on Covid-19. I call the mover.

INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY: CORONAVIRUS AND REBUILDING THE ECONOMY

SICK PAY DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND; LONG COVID
ABSENCES DIAGNOSIS AND SUPPORT AND ABSENCE RATES
MOTION 184

184. SICK PAY DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND; LONG COVID ABSENCES DIAGNOSIS AND SUPPORT AND ABSENCE RATES

This Congress notes the spotlight shone on the low levels of SSP in the UK during the pandemic.

Congress notes the reliance on Statutory Sick pay (SSP) rather than full Sick Pay levels during the Pandemic. This level of £96.35 is the lowest in real terms in two decades -2003 (TUC 18/12/2021)

This low level means that many haven't taken absences when they should, both for their own health and fellow workers

- Congress affirms the need to continue to campaign for extending SSP by removing the Lower Earnings Limit and that SSP is at least the level of the real Living wage (£346 pw)
- Congress believes that there should be no sickness penalties applied for Long Covid19 or Covid 19 absence. It's inevitable the virus will adapt; we will see different long-term effects and need to make sure our members are not penalised by such absences adding cumulatively to members health records.
- Congress is asked to ensure that the GMB's voice and pressure is added so that **Long Covid** is recognised as a diagnosis and qualifies for full sick pay, and that as with other illnesses that are debilitating, that reasonable adjustment is made by employers
- Congress further requests that research and monitoring on absences due to Covid 19 – including Long Covid are undertaken by the GMB, and with sister unions, particularly in high risk areas of prevalence, in sectors such as Schools, Retail sector and Transport , and that Government **collect and publish such data**.

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

HARRY CLARKE (London): Good morning Congress and President. I am moving Motion 184, which particularly looks at long-Covid absences diagnosis and support and absence rates.

Before I complete my motion, I would like to pay tribute to the excellent motions also on sick pay which preceded this motion, which will give us a great package to campaign for with sister unions and others in the labour Movement.

The pandemic, as we know and as we have heard during the week, has shown a spotlight on the appalling levels of sick pay in the UK and the qualifications to receive this. This has been scandalous in normal times but even worse in the pandemic. It has made matters worse for the economy and the shutdown disruptions, but it has undoubtedly cost lives. We must learn from this. We can but hope, can't we? Yet again, the question of decent sick pay has lifted the curtain on how we value the health and security of workers.

In December 2021 there were around 647,000 workers with no statutory sick pay. That is extraordinary. They were not able to isolate, and the UK has also the less generous SSP rate. Around 10 million workers had SSP too low to meet basic living costs. It's extraordinary! This is not just about the individual but how we can protect individual workplaces as well. We have heard about long Covid, and we heard at one of the fringes from the health and safety director for the GMB that there are at least two million people with long Covid of all ages. As in the past, our different struggles for paid holidays, maternity pay, paternity pay and sick pay, this motion is a necessary and overdue demand. It is a moral and an economic argument. They are not two separate things.

This motion is calling on the GMB to continue the campaign to remove the lower-earnings limit, to ensure that SSP is at least at the level of the real living wage, and what is particularly important here is that long Covid is recognised as a diagnosis and qualifies for full sick pay. I don't think we are going to get overnight results on that but more research. Also it calls on the GMB to undertake further research on absences due to Covid and long Covid. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Harry. I call the seconder.

ALAN LAW (London): President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 184. The pandemic has shone a light on the appalling levels of sick pay in the UK. This motion describes the current levels. The world of work is not just about what happens at work but when you can't work. About one-third of businesses were reported by members as not taking action to reduce the effects of Covid. We also see from reports how staff have been forced to come into work, infecting other staff and public alike, whether at the workplace or while travelling to work.

We call upon the GMB to continue the campaign to remove the lower-earnings limit and to ensure that SSP is at least a level of the real living wage.

Also members' health records should not be penalised by long Covid being added to their health records. Please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. Does anyone wish to oppose this motion? *(No response)* No. In that case, I ask Kevin Hensby to respond for the CEC, please.

KEVIN HENSBY (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motion 184. The CEC is asking for Congress to support Motion 184 with two qualifications. The first is that the proposed rates of statutory sick pay should be rated at the real living wage, demands made according to GMB policy and uprated every year by inflation.

Secondly, the campaigning identified by the motion should not just be performed with sister unions but also with Trade Union Congresses, pressure groups and other interested parties. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 184 with the qualification set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Does London Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you. They do accept. We will now take the vote on Motion 184. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 184 was CARRIED.

CEC STATEMENT ON THE COST OF LIVING

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to the CEC's Statement on the Cost of Living. After the Statement has been moved and seconded, I will invite each region to speak – this time in reverse alphabetical order. I call Arron Bevan-John to move the report.

Congress 2022

CEC Statement on the Cost of Living

Summary

Workers are facing the worst cost of living and wages crisis in generations. This is a crisis that demands an industrial and a policy response.

This Statement updates GMB's core Real Living Wage demand from £12 to £15 an hour and establishes in GMB policy the union's key industrial priority of bargaining for £15 an hour in the care sector.

Wages in crisis

Living standards are set to endure their sharpest fall since the 1950s. Energy prices are spiralling. Prices are outstripping wages across the economy.

Inflation is expected to average 10 per cent this year. Increases to the cost of living are expected remain at historically high rates for at least two years – and possibly beyond.

Shareholders' dividends doubled in the decade before the pandemic but average real wages have not grown in 14 years. Profits depend on labour, but around the world the share of profit returned to labour is shrinking as union membership declines.

The consequences of decades of pay erosion and low investment are now being felt. Employers are struggling to recruit. Vacancy rates are the highest on record. GMB's longstanding belief that the path to productivity growth runs through high wages and high levels of investment has never been more relevant.

GMB's response

GMB's response to the cost-of-living crisis has been twofold. The union has bargained for fair pay rises for our members, including through industrial action. Examples of recent pay settlements won by GMB include: G4S at Croydon Hospital (24% with backpay and an occupational sick pay scheme), Eastbourne refuse collection (19% over two years), and VolkerRail (up to 14.5%).

GMB also renews its calls for the burden of environmental levies to be transferred from household bills onto general taxation, and for VAT on energy to be set at 0%. The union has also set out new policy proposals at a national level – such as reserving a fair share of UK-produced gas for domestic households and energy-intensive industries.

These are all policies that would make an immediate difference to members' finances. But we know that the two most effective ways of raising incomes are through collective bargaining, and through raising the minimum wage floor.

A Real Living Wage – GMB policy

GMB was one of the first unions to call for a National Minimum Wage policy. Our longstanding position is to support the tripartite Low Pay Commission approach, while calling for the Low Pay Commission to be reformed to focus more clearly on workers' interests, with a widened remit to investigate the structural causes of low pay and make policy recommendations to governments.

There is an urgent need for policy investigations and funding increases in chronically low-paying sectors, such as a social care (where average pay has been just a few pence above the National Minimum Wage for many years), and schools – teaching assistants were paid just £14,000 on average in 2021. Public service outsourcing has driven down pay rates. The Low Pay Commission should investigate these areas and make recommendations, alongside Real Living Wage demands that cover all low-paid workers.

We recognise that the National Minimum Wage was initially set too low, and the rate has never fully caught up. We remain concerned about the need to raise the pay of all-low paid workers, including those who are nominally paid more than the National Minimum Wage rate. We oppose age-based criteria and call for the abolition of discriminatory lower National Minimum Wage rates.

Congress 2021 updated our demand for the National Minimum Wage to be replaced with a Real Living Wage of at least £12 an hour, reflecting increases in RPI inflation since Congress first adopted a £10 an hour demand in 2014.

At the same time, Congress instructed GMB:

'to continually review inflation rates ... and from time to time to bring further proposals for uprating our headline demands for debate at future Congresses.'

2021 Statement on Pay and the Cost of Living

The dramatic increase in inflation since last year must now be taken into account. If inflation holds at current rates then our core demand would have to be increased to £14.50 by Congress 2023, just to keep pace.

In an April 2022 survey of a representative sample of working GMB members, 77 per cent said that the National Minimum Wage should be no less than £15 an hour.

In light of the current cost of living crisis and the increased value placed on scarce labour, Congress therefore raises its demand for a statutory increase so that no worker is paid less than £15 an hour.

In recognition that this demand will likely be resisted by the current UK Government, Congress also reiterates its call for sectoral and employer-level bargaining for at least £15 an hour now – starting with our priority campaign: the fight for £15 in social care.

ARRON BEVAN-JOHN (CEC): Good morning, President and Congress. I am moving the Cost of Living Statement on behalf of the CEC.

Congress, we are in the grip of the worst crisis on living standards since records began. Inflation is running at more than 11%, energy bills have doubled and the cost is being borne by working people. Nearly two-thirds of working GMB members report that the rise in energy prices has forced them to cut back on food and other essentials. Half of our members have been forced to borrow money in the last six months just to make ends meet. It is a mark of shame that key workers are being driven to food banks and to loan sharks.

Do you know what remedy was prescribed by Andrew Bailey, the Governor of the Bank of England? He said that workers should consider restraint before asking for pay rises. This from a man who was paid almost £600,000 last year, and who refused GMB's invitation to join a minimum wage shift. Congress, it is a disgrace. We need to be clear – this is a wage crisis.

We can call for new policies and laws in Westminster and the devolved governments, but at the end of the day there are two main ways to raise working class living standards. They are by increasing the national minimum wage and, even more importantly, through collective bargaining, backed by strong working-place organisation in the GMB. That is GMB members are fighting and winning. Examples are 24% at G4S Croydon, and 21% at Adur & Worthing Refuse Services. This statement by the CEC sets out policies that GMB is calling for to address this immediate crisis. This includes reversing a share of North Sea gas to bring prices down for UK homes and industries, and it updates our core national minimum wage demand.

GMB's long-standing position is that the national minimum wage should be replaced by a real living wage. Initially, that was set at £10 per hour. Last year Congress updated that demand to £12 an hour in line with inflation. With inflation running rampant and the highest number of vacancies on record, the time has come to increase our minimum wage demand again. Congress, a £15 an hour minimum wage is in line with projected inflation, and it is supported by more than three-quarters of our working members. We should match it with a bargaining demand for £15 an hour where our members support it. It would be a real pay rise. We should accept nothing less. Thank you. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Arran. Arran, happy birthday. (*Congress sang Happy Birthday*) Have a lovely day. Thank you for spending your birthday at the GMB Congress. I hope it has been memorable for you. Sarah, I ask you to second.

SARAH HURLEY (CEC): President and Congress, I am seconding the CEC Statement on the Cost of Living.

Congress, you heard earlier this week about how GMB is leading the way for the "Fight for £15" in social care and beyond. GMB was instrumental in the creation of the national minimum wage. The policy was demanded by this Congress as long ago as 1983. Many said it could not be done. It took 15 years to achieve it, but it has lifted the incomes of millions, and we should be proud of that record.

However, we must be honest. The Labour Government in 1998, under pressure from business, set the rate too low and it has never caught up. Too many workers are trapped just above the minimum, and wages have been squeezed. That is why GMB calls for reforms of the Low Pay Commission so that we can look at all forms of low pay and hold the ministers to account. The Tories can rebrand the national minimum wage to what they call the “real living wage”, but it is not enough.

Congress, last year you instructed the CEC to continually review inflation rates and, from time to time, to bring further proposals for up-rating our headline demands. That is what this statement does. We know that a £15 an hour minimum wage might not be achieved overnight but we must fight for it. Congress, please give us a mandate to take that fight to the Low Pay Commission, to the Government, to the Labour Party and to our employers. A decent standard of living for working people is what we demand. Please support the Statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. I will now ask the regions to speak. Let me just remind delegates that after the vote on this statement, we will debate Emergency Motion 1. Could I have a speaker from Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, please?

FRANK NEEDHAM (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker, speaking on the cost of living. *(Applause)*

Capitalism lurches from crisis to crisis with no answers to the problems it creates, apart from blaming workers. This cost of living crisis is hitting workers harder than at any time since the 1950s. Our living standards are in free fall. Inflation is running wild and expected to hit 10% this year. It may even increase beyond that and for a longer period. Workers are bearing the brunt of the wage cuts in a capitalist economic system that is out of control, while shareholders' dividends are on the increase. As usual, those who create the crisis are the ones who profit most. The average pay of a FTSE chief executive is £2.7 million, or 87 times that of the average salary of a full-time worker. Their profits depend on workers' labour, but workers are seeing their share of the profits reduced. This is linked with the decline in union membership.

The response of the GMB is twofold. The first is pay bargaining. It is essential that workers receive fair pay for the work they do and that workers are organised to bargain for pay rises that enable them to support themselves and their families. It is workplace organisations that enable workers to fight and win.

The second response is environmental levies. The GMB believes that environmental levies should be transferred from household bills to general taxation and that VAT be set at 0%. The GMB Union is a campaigning union. It is at the forefront in campaigning for a real living wage for workers. Outsourcing private/public services has seen a race to the bottom with pay and conditions. It cannot be right that teaching assistants are paid an average of £14 grand a year to ensure that our children are safe, secure and educated. It cannot be right that care workers, mainly women, are paid in 15-minute blocks. Some must work excessive hours just to get the minimum wage.

The GMB is calling for a £15 per hour minimum wage. We know what the Tories and their capitalist friends will think of that. Let us be clear, all workers are better – we cannot rely on anyone else but ourselves – when they take the fight themselves to

protect their own interests. They must organise in every workplace and fight for every worker. The workplace is the building block for the GMB. Change is coming. We are many and they are few! Take the power back. It belongs to you. I recommend the CEC's Special Statement on the Cost of Living. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Frank. I call GMB Wales & South West.

JAMIE BUNKER (GMB Wales & South West): Good morning, Congress. I am from the Wales & South West Region. I am speaking in support of the CEC Special Statement on the Cost of Living. This is my first time here as a delegate and this is my first time up here speaking. *(Applause)*

Congress, we welcome this Statement and, in the light of the current cost-of-living crisis and the increased demand and value placed on scarce labour, we must implement the measures called within the Statement. We are calling for an increase in the real living wage from £12 to £15 per hour as living standards and energy prices are spiralling out of control. A rapid increase in energy costs, particularly the wholesale price of gas, has been a key driver of the recent increases in inflation, housing and household services, which include electricity, gas and transport, which includes motor fuels, contributing to around half of CPI inflation in April of this year.

Average petrol prices were the highest on record in April 2022 at 161p to 197.1p per litre compared with 125p per litre 12 months ago.

Colleagues, as the Statement reads, the consequence of decades of pay free increases and low investment have led to a situation which, again, leaves our members – the working class and our vulnerable communities – struggling to heat their homes and feed their families. A decade ago the idea of people skipping meals to feed their families or being unable to food altogether was unthinkable.

Fast forward to 2022 and, sadly, this is a bleak reality for millions of people across the UK. They are faced with impossible choices of how to make their money stretch. As a result, we are seeing an increase in families who need the support of organisations week after week, in desperate need of advice and support on how to pay for food or to keep the lights on. Every day we hear from parents who are skipping meals to try and keep their children fed or making impossible choices between paying rocketing food bills or rent. In the sixth-wealthiest economy in the world, this simply isn't right.

In the light of the current cost-of-living crisis, this Statement asks Congress to raise its demands for a statutory increase so that no worker, whatever the sector or industry, is paid less than £15 per hour. Wales & South West Region support the CEC on its Statement and will campaign and organise around achieving the asks of the Statement. We must collectively organise around the principles of the Statement. Colleagues, don't just support the Statement but act on it. We must campaign around it. I support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jamie. I call a speaker from Southern Region.

CHARLES ADJE (Southern): Congress, I am speaking on the CEC Statement on Cost of Living. The report, in my view, is short, succinct and to the point. We know

that on Sunday, during her speech, Madam President referred to this issue of the cost of living. When our General Secretary spoke yesterday, he referred to it. A number of colleagues have spoken and they have told us of their experiences, as did our special guest, our Shadow Chancellor, referred to this again.

What more can I add to the debate? We have called for a statutory £15 per hour. I am sure a number of colleagues – in fact, all of you – are aware, having received the email from the General Secretary about the rally in London on Saturday. I will encourage as many of you to avail yourself of it if you can, although I know it will be difficult, to attend the rally. We must let the Government know that we do mean business and that enough is enough. *(Applause)* Working people matter and deserve to be well remunerated. Please support this Statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charles. GMB Scotland.

BRENDA CARSON (GMB Scotland): I am speaking in support of the CEC Statement on the Cost of Living. The past two years have been like no other. Whilst some workers were able to work from home, many workers, often the lowest paid and most essential, worked through the peak of the pandemic on the frontline in both the public and the private sectors. They went to disproportionate lengths to keep shelves stocked, facilities clean and people cared for. Without this labour, the pandemic would, without doubt, have caused more deaths and made life during the lockdown a lot harder for many. Now, as we emerge from the worst of the pandemic, these same workers are facing more years like no other. They are expected to do more for less, shoulder the burden of the cost-of-living crisis and inflation is at a 40-year high.

We can all remember politician after politician standing on the doorstep to clap our carers and their warm words in the news for frontline workers. These same politicians are the ones who now deny those workers the dignity of a fair wage. They have gone back to their Parliamentary parties and the media circus rather than addressing the rights and needs of workers. The political class has no vision to protect and improve living standards. They have committed themselves to a 12-year austerity agenda, which has outsourced public services and driven wages down. Now in Scotland, the Scottish Government's own spending review, has doubled down on the austerity agenda. The Scottish Government is attempting to pitch worker against worker and union against union. They aim to cut the public service workforce by 30,000 and leverage pay rises against redundancies.

Like at Westminster, the political classes in Edinburgh are beset with no ideas as to how to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. They believe in low wages, low spending and low standards. Trade unions have won the right to have a respectable minimum wage in the past and we can do this again. There are no heroes waiting over the horizon to deliver this. To achieve £15 an hour will require the strength and organisation of unions in the workplace across Scotland and the rest of the UK. Congress, I support the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brenda. I call North West & Irish Region.

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish Region): Congress, I am speaking in support of this very important paper, the CEC Statement on the Cost of Living.

Sisters and Brothers, did we think in this modern, rich world that we live in that we would see a million pensioners in poverty, that we would see nearly two-thirds of children in families, in homes, where there is work but are still living in poverty? Did we think we would see age expectancy and life expectancy to drop? Millions of our workers are struggling. Millions of our workers are really finding it difficult to survive day to day. We are not just a voice for our members, but we're a voice for the whole of the community that live in and that we live in. Why is it that our ambulance workers are actually dependent on some of the welfare wagons and their rates of pay, in my view, for the hours that they are doing, for the slog they are doing, are still abysmal, given the effort? They are the people who are picking up the damage, the lame and the ill every day.

I watched a good friend of mine struggle right through the crisis. I watched her struggle to go to work, but she went. She went because the principles were so important. We must fight to ensure that the key to this is good work, is properly paid work and is properly rewarded work, with decent pensions and decent conditions. Don't tell us what the role of trade unions is, Government. We know what that role is. Our role is to give the power to the roots of this Movement, to be able to strive for those things that are right, for the very principles that made this Movement strong, a basic decent income through a living wage that allows any worker to go home and have a decent life, a decent community and a decent means to live, not to be scabbling in poverty caused by your greed, whether that is government greed or employer greed.

We are essential elements in the struggle for social justice, Brothers and Sisters. You, on this floor, are the powerhouse to bring that fruition as you do every day. We win it through our hearts and our minds. We win it through the campaigns. We win it by backing the rate of £15 an hour and more for we lift up the downtrodden. We give hope to those who have lost hope, and we really live out the principles of this great Movement. Sisters and Brothers, don't just pass it: fight for it! Thank you.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Northern

PETER KANE (Northern): Peter Kane, still Northern Region, medical passed, transfer going ahead, 5th July for a world-record fee. *(Laughter)*

Congress, Northern Region agrees with the Statement. However, as has been said, we are a community union. We look after our communities, not only the workers – we agree with £15 an hour – but as a community union we look at the state pension. Not everyone has got good company pensions, and they haven't. The state pension is half of what we are asking for the minimum wage. So we need not only to campaign for the £15 an hour, which we agree with, but we must also campaign for our pensioners. The state pension needs to be raised. We must look after our members, our retired members and our communities. That's what we are here for. That's what we do. Northern Region supports. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Peter. Midlands & East Coast.

BEN COOK (Midlands & East Coast): Congress, I am speaking in support of the CEC Statement on the Cost of Living crisis. President and Congress, MPs are getting a pay rise in Westminster and there's a cost-of-living crisis going on. How is that right? It is not right. *(Applause)*

Boris, sort yourself out, mate! There are more food banks in the UK than McDonald's. This is in the 21st century. We know of private landlords who are charging extortionate rents to exploit our residents in the UK. It is absolutely disgraceful, and that needs to change. We've got Asda workers who earned the company billions of pounds throughout lockdown. The supermarkets were rubbing their hands, be in no doubt about it. And they can't even pay the workers on pay day! It is absolutely disgusting and it needs to change.

Nurses watched elderly people in hospitals shipped out into the care homes, and the care workers had to watch them die. What mental effect must that have had on our care workers, who are on just above the minimum wage, yet some are being paid below the minimum wage. It is time for £15 an hour for our care workers. It is time to change.

This is a failure of the Tory Government. Everything that they say in Westminster is bent. They do not care, and let's oust the Tories together. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. London Region.

TRUDI TEW (London): Madam President and Congress, supporting this Statement is a no-brainer. So I have a question for you. What sort of exercise does a Tory do? Answer: Running, running this country into the ground. *(Applause)* They are why London Region is wholeheartedly supporting this CEC cost-of-living statement to move a demand for a living wage of £15 an hour. I don't need to give you examples of the current cost-of-living crisis because, like me, you are affected by it. It's a travesty that some companies find ways to avoid paying the minimum wage, let alone the true living wage! We have heard each other's motions this week regarding pay, and many, if not most employment sectors, amongst those London Region has been particularly campaign for are airport workers, and my pet subject, school support staff.

Is there anyone out there who doesn't need us to fight for them about pay? Yes: Cabinet Ministers and their cronies. We must also fight to remove the age-related minimum wage structure. In a London Region survey, 99% of young persons were worried about the cost of living, and 54% felt they had suffered age-related wage discrimination. We need this because I'm only 22. For too long wages have not kept up with inflation. It's time to say no to pay rises that are really real-time pay cuts.

Now I need to say a huge thank you. Thank you, Tories. Their ill-thought, self-serving, unfair policies and actions have given us all the ammunition we need to organise gay members and fight for fairness. Colleagues, I hope you have felt the benefit that I have in coming together at Congress this week. I hope the fire in your bellies is renewed. That's what this is, not that I've eaten too much! We are GMB. We are the union for all people. Together we can gain fair pay for our members and ourselves. I'm ready. Are you? *(Calls of "Yes" amidst applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Trudi. I call Birmingham & West Midlands. *(Declined)* No? Okay. Thank you to all delegates. We have two motions on your agenda that have been withdrawn in favour of the Statement. Those are Composite 12 and Motion 172. Thank you to Yorkshire, Birmingham and London Regions for agreeing to withdraw. We will, therefore, move to a vote. All those in favour of the CEC Statement on the Cost of Living, please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

*The CEC Statement on the Cost of Living was **CARRIED**.*

EMERGENCY MOTION 1: TERMINAL CHAOS

EMERGENCY MOTION ONE: TERMINAL CHAOS

This Congress recognises that as travel COVID restrictions were lifted on 18 March 2022 we started to see scenes of airport chaos at Easter as the public started to have the confidence to fly.

It has long been a race to the bottom culture at UK airports with indirect supply chain staff suffering most. These contracted staff such as check in staff, baggage handlers, catering, cleaners and security are the lowest paid and have suffered at the hands of airlines pushing the tenders and margins down. These workers are keyworkers and essential to the running of the airports yet are not paid well.

GMB has been campaigning to save the Aviation Sector to ensure a safe recovery for workers and the public, but our efforts have fallen on deaf ears.

Unions consistently made companies aware of the consequence of the thousands of furloughed airport workers being made redundant and who left the sector for higher paid jobs and not returning.

It was no surprise that many of these low paid workers paid under £10 left the airports to find higher paid jobs in burger chains or retail.

Congress, the chaos we are still seeing around our airports today is no fault of the workers. These low paid staff have taken pay cuts of at least 10% over the pandemic and are now being denied decent below inflation pay increases to allow them to survive. They continue to work under pressure on back-to-back shifts, skipping breaks just to provide a service.

We call on Congress to put pressure on the airport operating and ground handling companies to ensure that all directly employed and contract staff are paid at least the London Living Wage at all London airports as an absolute minimum.

In addition, the airline industry should work with unions to build back the reputation of the industry so that it is a model of exemplary pay, terms and conditions.

A37 Aviation Security Branch
London Region
(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Emergency Motion: Terminal Chaos. Could I have the mover, please, and can the movers and seconders of Motions 175 and 258 also come down.

GRAHAM PARKHOUSE (London): First-time speaker, first-time delegate. *(Applause)* Thank you. I will be talking about Emergency Motion 1 on the chaos at the airports. It is my great honour to represent my members today who would like Congress to hear about what really happens at our airports. It has long been the norm for companies in the aviation sector to be part of a trend known as “race to the bottom”, contracts and tenders offered to airlines at ever lower rates, year on year, and ultimately our members now suffering as a result across the UK, and they are now making that daily choice between food and heat.

This business model cannot continue. Our lowest paid cleaning and security staff are currently receiving a sole destroying £10 per hour and no other option than to work extra hours. In fact, it is the norm for staff to regularly work 350 hours or more a month to survive, and also having terms and conditions eroded, with the constant threat of fire and rehire. This is unacceptable.

Congress, we need the full force of ours and other unions to put pressure on unscrupulous companies to stop these outrageous business practices. During furlough hundreds of airport workers left the industry for other jobs which paid more. This left airports vulnerable with a massive shortfall of staff. We warned employers that this would be happening, that there should be training and recruiting the new replacement staff for when flights continued as we know how long it takes to train and get security clearance to work in airports, but they do not listen.

It is no fault of our hardworking members that we are now seeing the queues and chaos at airports. Our members are overworked, they are exhausted, and have to come to work sick as they cannot afford to lose a shift. One of our members was so exhausted recently that he had a car accident travelling home after doing a double back-to-back.

Congress, the airline industry needs to be a model for all. We need to build back the reputation of good training, good terms and conditions. Our General Secretary, Gary, has been to Heathrow last week to ask for the London living wage for all directly employed and contracted staff. I thank you for that. That is a start but we have been promised this for years. We will continue to fight for our members’ rights to improve and enhance the terms and conditions, to stamp out the zero hours, and the intolerable low pay the employers seem to think is acceptable. We must as our great union says make work better. Brothers and sisters, solidarity. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

WAYNE OSWICK (London): I have been working in the aviation sector now for 26 years and this motion is so relevant of today due to the constant reporting of the news media over the daily passenger delays at UK airports. Let’s go back to 2020, airlines flights ever increasing, passengers were happy, figures rising constantly. Contrary to misleading press by the Tory media outlets aviation is not a well paid sector. At Stansted Airport check-in staff, baggage handlers, and cleaners, were only receiving

round about £10.70 per hour. Their pay has stagnated over the last two years but we have huge shareholder profits for airlines. GMB has constantly reported this irresponsible practice.

During Covid many members suffered horrendous job cuts, threats to T&Cs, imposed pay reductions of 10 to 20% to basic pay by unscrupulous large flagship airlines and sector employers, all with the threat hanging over their heads of fire and rehire. Today, aviation has lost thousands of jobs over the two-year period. Small numbers are applying in the opposite direction for jobs in the industry so there is a downfall. The writing was on the wall long before March this year. You may ask why: fact, the pay is low, then it was two years ago due to pay cuts, and workers leaving to work in local supermarkets in the gig economy, lack of intake of staff in key areas, working hours start for many at 3.30 a.m. with no enhancements or unsociable hour payments, late night shift finishing, Working Time Directive being ignored by management, and pressure to work through the break periods at times. I appreciate we have a red light here so I will finish. We demand better and a new deal for the working people. Congress, I support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Wayne, for winding up on time. Does any delegate wish to speak against the motion? Can I ask Gary Harris to respond for the CEC.

GARY HARRIS (CEC): First of all, I just want to say fantastic news to be back in the room with so many fantastic brothers and sisters of this great union. (*Applause*) President, Congress, responding to Emergency Motion 1, for the CEC. Congress, the CEC fully supports the aims of this motion. Aviation workers have been amongst the hardest hit during the pandemic and we believe that urgent support is urgently needed for this sector. Employers must also address the worker shortages by raising pay and the equality of employment. We recognise that GMB, including London Region, are campaigning strongly on this important issue.

We are supporting this motion with two qualifications. This is to uphold the principle that our branches and the negotiators must be free to set their own industrial demands in consultation with members and that Congress does not seek to determine the details of individual claims. We also believe that living wage rates should also be seen as a floor, not a ceiling. With those qualifications, Congress, we ask that you support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. I think you are responding again for the CEC. Yes. Okay. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. You do accept the qualification. We will vote on Emergency Motion 1. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That Emergency Motion is carried.

Emergency Motion 1 was CARRIED.

INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY: TAXATION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Motion 175, Industrial and Economic Policy: Taxation. Then after this motion we will debate Motion 258. A mover for Motion 175, please.

NO TO NATIONAL INSURANCE INCREASE

MOTION 175

175. NO TO NATIONAL INSURANCE INCREASE

This Congress notes the Tory Government's announcement for a 1.25p in the pound increase in National Insurance, amounting to a 10% uplift, to be imposed on workers

There should be no increase in National Insurance contributions.

With the added increase in cost of living and no meaningful, or if at all, increase in wages for decades this will hit the lowest paid workforce. Many workers are already making decisions of whether to eat or heat. This increase will be catastrophic for many workers pushing them even further into the "in- work poverty" breadline.

We therefore urge Congress to:

1. Ensure, as far as is possible, to have a concerted campaign to highlight this issue and to scrap the increase in National Insurance.
2. Work alongside GMB Labour Party MP/Councillors to scrap this increase.
3. Raise awareness as far as is practicable with members and provide, if possible, signposting to relevant support services to help members who will be impacted by the increase.

EALING BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

ABDI DUALE (London): Good morning, Congress. Twelve years of Tory austerity has seen communities decimated up and down our country. The current cost-of-living crisis is plunging thousands of families into poverty and our key workers who saw us through the pandemic now are having to rely on food banks. As we heard from our General Secretary yesterday, one third of teaching assistants in London Region have to rely on food banks to make ends meet.

Congress, I want to tell you the story of Natalie. Natalie is a 35-year old mother of two children. Despite working long hours as a team leader in a dementia care home the Hampshire based parent needs to claim universal credit due to her low salary. To try to mitigate against the impact of the current cost-of-living increases Natalie is trying to live as cheaply as possible. Like most of us she worries about money every single day. She said everything has gone up, the gas, electricity has gone up by around £30 a month, petrol has gone up, rent and council tax have gone up, even Netflix has gone up.

Whilst people like Natalie were on the front line looking after our elderly neighbours and relatives, protecting them from Covid-19, this lying, bumbling charlatan of a Prime Minister partied non stop. We have all heard how his staff treated the security staff and cleaners in Number 10, workers who left their families day in, day out, to help keep our country running. Congress, this is the price we pay for an out-of-touch Tory government.

Now, the cost-of-living crisis is not unique to Britain and Russia's barbaric invasion of Ukraine is adding to this cost, but no other country in the G7 is putting taxes up, only this Government is. Meanwhile the Treasury has written off £4.3bn in fraud during Covid and this week we learn they have wasted another £11bn on what can only be described as gross mismanagement of public finances.

This tax on work should be and will be challenged. I hope many of you will be in London this weekend to join us on the TUC's Demand Better rally to send a message to Boris Johnson and the Tories that we will not stand by whilst our key workers lose their pay. Congress, I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Abdi. A seconder?

HEATHER HAMBLIN (London): President, Congress, a National Insurance increase is a tax on the lowest paid in society. Let's call it what it is, a tax. We are in a period where many are living in extreme poverty, heating and lighting are a luxury, and food banks are essential. Where does this Government expect workers to find this money? We need to raise awareness of this amongst our members, friends and family, we need to know about relevant services we can signpost members to, if we need to, but most importantly of all this union should be campaigning to get this tax scrapped. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Heather. Does anyone wish to speak to oppose the motion? No? I will then put it to the vote. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 175 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask the mover of Motion 258 to come to the rostrum, please, and also ask for the movers of Motions 283 to 287 to come to the front.

SOCIAL POLICY: THE ENERGY & UTILITIES MARKET

NATIONAL PRICE INCREASE CRISIS

MOTION 258

258. NATIONAL PRICE INCREASE CRISIS

This Congress notes the increased prices in house fuel, but it does not stop there, what we are seeing is the prices going up in your everyday food bill.

This means that there will be a decision to be made, do we eat or do we heat the house, this should not be happening, it is up to the government to stop the fat cats getting paid extra for the pandemic that we have all been in.

It will not stop there as we approach April 2022 the house fuel prices will go up another 50%.

Why is it that we all have to pay the higher prices because the world is in a pandemic?

We did not cause the pandemic but we are sure paying for it.

We all know we were in lockdown, and now everything we eat, drink, cooking, heating and petrol has shot up and we the public have to pay the higher prices.

During the pandemic it was already established that we could not cope with the extra burden of paying for more of everything that was needed to stay at home working and having the children home from school, and now we are paying the price.

Have you noticed that the wage you receive, or the pension or allowance has not kept up with the inflation, so any rise if you have received one has been swallowed up and you are back to square one?

The extra money that was given for a short time has been taken back, but if you were working you did not receive this payment.

We ask Congress:

To work alongside the government to stop the unjust price increases.

To work with the government to keep inflation down.

GLASGOW NURSES BRANCH GMB Scotland

(Carried)

JAMIE MOORE (GMB Scotland): First-time delegate, first-time speaker.

(Applause) The National Minimum Wage has increased by 6.6% to £9.50 an hour, everything else has increased also. Food is up 6.7%, electricity is up 25%, gas 40%, public transport 5%, and the cost of running a car has almost doubled. I keep reminding myself that we are not a poor country and we are one of the top eight economies in the world yet we treat our working class the way the Victorians treated theirs 180 years ago.

Charles Dickens wrote that it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was a season of hope, and it was a season of discontent. This time is now. If you are a millionaire, or a Tory Party minister, his millionaire wife pays no taxes in the UK, things have never been so good. What does a millionaire Chancellor know about living on £9.50 an hour? In my NHS working life I have known people who worry about the cost of living with the poor are getting poorer, the rich are getting richer, and we at GMB have to stand up to a political class that has one rule for them and a different one for us. *(Applause)*

I listen every day to our hardworking members, everyone is saying how hard life is right now, and those paid workers after working all week are going to food banks in their thousands. In 2019, there were 4.3 million kids in poverty in the UK. That is 4.3 million talented kids; that number has now risen to nearly 5 million. They all deserve a better chance in life and not to be pushed further into poverty.

I have a story from one of our members who works a 48-hour week at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow. They cannot afford the bus, they cannot afford to heat their home, they are in a private let, have been on a waiting list for two years for

social housing, when his kids are not at home he does not use the heating, he relies on food banks every month, and feels like a failure.

In Scotland the Scottish government has committed to cutting 30,000 public sector workers' jobs and reduce the public sector pay increase. The derisory insulting 2% pay offer is an insult, especially to those on the worst pay who would receive a pathetic £10 a week increase. Fact, NHS workers are 20% worse off after 12 years of a Tory government. Many workers across Scotland and the rest of the UK are in the exact same position as my friend. What so many are experiencing is unacceptable and the Government are sitting by and allowing it to happen. Instead, we need a plan to tackle the cost of living to keep rents, energy, and essentials down, and a commitment to put public sector pay up and increase the national living wage; it will not only make a difference to workers' lives but also to their children's lives. Work must not only pay but it must also give people dignity and respect. Charles Dickens' Victorian Britain must be a thing of the past, not our future. Congress, I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Secunder?

STEWART HOSSACK (GMB Scotland): First-time delegate. First-time speaker. (*Applause*) Whatever your views are on public transport, whether you use a car, a bus, or a bike to get to work, the rising cost of fuel affects all of us and resonates in every part of our lives, from cooking to heating, to having a night out. On my daily commute to work I pass a number of petrol stations and almost each day I note the price very rarely stays the same, often on the rise. Last Thursday I was shocked to see the price standing at £1.94 per litre diesel and in June 2020 that price for the same product was around £1.10.

To compound these exorbitant and unjustifiable increases, wages have not kept pace with inflation which is now hovering around 9%. Many years ago I recall a fellow worker telling me that it was cheaper to be rich than to be poor. A very enigmatic statement: how can this be true? How can that be true? Well, as incomes get squeezed more and more it often results in being forced to buy smaller quantities of goods and that means having to pay a higher price when larger quantities cost less. For example, car tax, it is cheaper if you make a one-off payment but break that down to two, or 12 instalments and the price is increased by around 13% to 20%. This is one of the mechanisms that the powers to be use to keep the poor on their knees. If this is levelled across the board, then anything less than an inflationary pay rise is actually a deficit. I second this motion. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stewart. Does anyone wish to oppose the motion? No? I now call on Gary Harris to respond for the CEC.

GARY HARRIS (CEC): Vice President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motion 258. The CEC supports the overall intent of this motion with qualifications to outline our approach to this important issue. The first is that while we are generally opposed to unjust price increases as a result of rising cost of living we should be careful to avoid subscribing to an agenda of limiting our members' purchasing power. GMB's approach has been that higher pay is the most important part of the answer to the problem of rising costs of living. Opposing price increases

should also not be interpreted as support for price controls on goods and services that by doing so harms our members working in particular industries and supply chains.

The CEC's second qualification is that we should recognise that our members' interests and those of the Government will not always be the same. This was evidenced by the Government's plan to scrap the RPI rate of inflation which GMB representatives use in pay negotiations. We do not rule out the Government on the areas of joint aims and interests for our members though the Government will not be a neutral party in such matters. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 258 with the qualifications set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Does Scotland agree the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 258 is CARRIED.

SOCIAL POLICY: WELFARE RIGHTS AND SERVICES

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Could I now ask for the mover of Motion 283 to come to the rostrum, please.

A RIGHT TO JUSTICE BEFORE DWP ACTION
MOTION 283

283. A RIGHT TO JUSTICE BEFORE DWP ACTION

This Congress is requested to campaign for the payments of welfare benefits not to be stopped for disabled and sick benefit claimants before a decision by an independent Tribunal.

NORFOLK PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

VAUGHAN THOMAS (London): Congress, this motion is quite straightforward. Benefit claimants should not have their benefits stopped before a tribunal hearing and a judge have pronounced on it. I am not advocating a revolution here. Tenants cannot be evicted before the landlord has taken a tenant to court and rightly so. Given this, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that a benefit claimant should not have their benefits stopped until a judge has ruled on it. Suffice to say those benefit claimants are likely as not tenants too. It is strange to have one right in one area but not in another. It cannot be right and certainly does not meet the threshold to qualify for any form of social justice to leave a family penniless and driven into the arms of a food bank only to find later, much later, several months later, that that decision to stop their benefit was wrong.

I work as a welfare rights case worker at Norfolk Community Law Service, a charity, representing benefit claimants at tribunals. Our success rate at tribunals is over 82%. In one sense you might think this is very good. It is not. It is a damning indictment of DWP decision making. Congress, if we were talking about car manufacturing we would have sorted this problem before now but people in poverty do not get the

priority of car manufacture. This system has to change. Support this motion. I move.
(*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vaughan. Secunder?

VIVIEN THOMAS (London): Vice President, Congress, the British legal system is supposed to be built on reasonableness. Currently, this is not the case and families are being left in hardship. No one reliant on our benefit system on the worst most basic of incomes should be left without an income before a judge and tribunal have had a chance to pronounce on it. This punitive practice has to stop. It is causing unnecessary hardship and misery to some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. The mover of 284, please.

ADDRESSING THE “COST OF LIVING CRISIS”

MOTION 284

284. ADDRESSING THE ‘COST OF LIVING CRISIS’

This Congress is requested to campaign for the Government to negotiate bulk discounts on everyday food and consumer products on behalf of all in-work and out of work Welfare Benefit claimants, to include Tax Credits and Universal Credit claimants, to increase the purchasing power of their existing Welfare Benefit payments.

The Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department & Treasury to negotiate directly with manufacturers, suppliers and retailers of food and everyday consumer products to leverage on the collective and combined purchasing power of those on low incomes which amounts to over £200bn GB pounds a year. Helping to reduce poverty and inequality by using market forces to maximise the purchasing power of the economically least powerful members of our communities and funded by the private sector.

NORFOLK PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH

London Region

(*Carried*)

VAUGHAN THOMAS (London): Congress, securing bulk discounts is nothing new but it would be for those in poverty and in many cases destitute and forced to use food banks. Food banks should not exist. Even the Trussell Trust want to see an end to food banks and, Congress, this is achievable. It should be a manageable target and not by accepting the crumbs – no pun intended – from mainstream suppliers of food and everyday consumer products. It should not mean the community groups have to reinvent the wheel of production, supply, distribution, or retail of food. This country has one of the most sophisticated food production and distribution systems in the world, notwithstanding Brexit, of course, and notwithstanding Covid, notwithstanding Russia invading Ukraine, we do still have a system, though. It needs to change. Selling food on consignment to consumers in poverty and in receipt of benefit effectively giving them free a week’s supply of food to be stored freely in their homes and only charging for top-up purchases will dispense with the need of food banks overnight. The DWP has the power to initiate this given its position in the marketplace, and if this or future government were minded to seek to eradicate the

need for food banks, it is possible, but it is a political decision and it is a doable decision; it has always been the case. I second this motion. Please support it.
(*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vaughan. Secunder?

VIVIEN THOMAS (London): Vice President, Congress, apologies, I am moving this motion. At present, people in poverty and in receipt of welfare benefits, including many in work, are among the financially poorest in our communities. This would include some of our GMB brothers and sisters. Women are among the most disadvantaged having to pay the highest unit rate for some products and services, such as prepayment meters, paying in advance and charged more in the topsy-turvy world of benefit claimants. Although it was many years ago I speak from personal experience when I say that using a prepayment meter is not a good place to be. A solution to this is collective action, the bedrock of the trade union Movement and the cooperative movement. By working collectively it is possible to negotiate reduced unit rates, for example, for menstrual products and the food we all need to eat on a daily basis. For those in poverty, both in and out of work, this would make a real difference to the quality of life in this cost-of-living crisis.

The Department of Work and Pensions is an organisation able to negotiate bulk discounts. With an annual budget of over £200m a year individual benefit claimants cannot secure discounts on the required scale for the purchasing power needed. We know from history of the workhouses for those who were destitute and the poor and the sick who had to rely on the charity of their parish churches. In the 21st century those churches have established soup kitchens and food banks and thousands of people rely on them to get by on a day-by-day basis. We need our own levelling up programme, innovative ideas to change the current status quo to lift those thousands of individuals and families out of the dire straits they are currently in. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vivien. Motion 285?

THE CUTTING OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT MOTION 285

285. THE CUTTING OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT

This Congress condemns the cutting of the Universal Credit. The cut will have a devastating impact on our members on low income.

Congress knows £20 per week helps families to be able to put food on the table or to heat their homes.

The extra money has helped to budget better and was a lifeline for our members on low paid work.

Now that's gone, we need the jobs for our members to be on decent pay.

We call on Congress to lobby the Government to look at the impact of these decisions and reinstate this payment so that those on Universal Credit don't lose any more money.

LONDON HOTELS & CATERING BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

KIM HENDRY (London): Congress, at the start of the pandemic in 2020 the Government agreed an uplift to Universal Credit of £20. It was a lifeline to some of the most economically vulnerable households, those who were out of work or in the lowest paid jobs. Then in October 2021 the Government removed that £20 uplift. This came at a time when energy bills and food prices were starting to soar. Chancellor Rishi Sunak, who, with his wife, has an estimated household wealth of £730m, justified this attack on working class people by saying it had been a temporary measure to deal with the acute phase of the pandemic. His decision was widely criticised, more so given it coincided with the start of the cost-of-living crisis. As that crisis now worsens, with more and more children and families forced into poverty, this motion instructs GMB to campaign for the £20 uplift to be restored to the 5.6 million people currently claiming benefits.

Congress, restoring the £20 uplift is an important demand. However, the broader fact is that benefits are at their lowest levels in 30 years. The CEC will support this motion with a qualification. The qualification is that we need a radical overhaul to Universal Credit. London Region agrees this qualification because, Congress, even before the £20 uplift was removed many benefit recipients were destitute, in other words, they were being forced to go without the essentials we all need to eat, stay warm and dry, keep clean, all the things that other motions have covered as well.

Universal Credit is now the main benefit for anyone of working age who has a low income, whether in paid work or not. It was set up to create a welfare system that provided people with the confidence and security to play a full part in society; that was the Government's words. The Trussell Trust, however, has concluded, along with many other organisations, that by design through its inbuilt rules and cuts Universal Credit is now a benefit that fails to meet these aims. It is punitive, as we heard, with 82% of appeals are upheld because of the way it operates, applying sanctions in the most unreasonable and cruellest way when someone cannot meet an appointment, even where it is due to not being able to afford a bus fare, a family funeral, we have all heard the horror stories. This is not to blame the workforce who are chronically understaffed with huge workloads and hash targets, many on fixed-term contracts facing redundancy. Universal Credit is also inadequate financially. The Government's own data shows severe food insecurity, which is a good indicator of who is facing hunger in the UK, an increase in most households claiming Universal Credit during 2020 and 2021 i.e. when the £20 uplift was in place, so it is not sufficient. Yet in his Spring Statement the Chancellor failed to utilise the Universal Credit in responding to the cost-of-living crisis.

Congress, the failings of Universal Credit are a political choice by right-wing governments based on a right-wing ideology that dates back centuries, the notion that poverty and unemployment are inevitable caused by the characteristics of the workforce or unemployed rather than the failings of the capitalist system, Congress, we need a benefit system which provides benefits that people can live on for all who

need them and we need to stop subsidising exploitative employers and the capitalist class.

Congress, please support this motion, instruct our leadership to campaign for restoration of the £20 uplift and support the CEC qualification. We did not cause this cost-of-living crisis. We need liveable benefits for all. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kim. Secunder?

ZAHIDA ABBA-NOORI (London): President, Vice President, General Secretary, Congress, good morning. Congress, we all recognise that Covid has left very negative impacts on most of us, and our families, in relation to their daily needs and I believe some members of our families and the GMB family have lost their jobs and they are struggling to survive and feed their families with limited financial resources. At this difficult time, very difficult and hard time, the DWP stopped the rule for the £20, a really, really cruel action, and I believe it is not fair on the family, especially for the working class family and people who have a low income it is hard to survive while things are getting very expensive. Congress, the decision to end the Universal Credit was cruel and immoral. Let me share with you a story of just two of the six million claimants impacted.

A story in the *Daily Mirror* introduced a single Mum, Gemma, who spent 11 years as a police officer, and after changing her job after the birth of daughter she is now a senior investigating officer at her local council. Gemma said the extra £20 a week, which is £86 per month, made her feel comfortable and assured. It meant that Gemma could pay all her bills. It meant that she was not forced to buy essentials on her credit card and end up in debt. It was not enough but it did make a huge difference.

Congress, please support this motion calling for the restoration of the vital uplift. I second. Please support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Zahida. Mover of Motion 286.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT PAYMENT MOTION 286

286. BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT PAYMENT

This Congress notes that:

- Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) was implemented on 6 April 2017, replacing Widowed Parents' Allowance (WPA).
- Bereavement payments are essential for new basic living costs of childrearing alone.
- Payments allow some continuity with arrangements for childcare and flexibility to work, to fit new responsibilities as sole carer.
- WPA extended until the youngest child left full-time education; BSP's last 18 months. Parents of younger children lose up to £31,000 over 10 years.
- BSP is paid out of National Insurance but is not uprated with inflation.
- The government nets £100m annual savings with BSP.
- Widows not in a civil partnership or unmarried do not receive BSP.

This Congress believes that:

- Parents are not supported long enough to meet children's emerging grief, leading to additional stress.
- Financial support of widowed parents prevents later mental health issues.
- UC is not sufficient for widows and its conditionally unjust, stigmatizing and counter productive.
- Children are penalised for their parents' marital status.

We call on GMB to campaign to:

- Ensure that all widowed families receive BSP for 5 years or until the youngest child has finished a year of secondary school, whichever is longer.
- Ensure that cohabiting widows without children receive BSP.

SHERWOOD FOREST HOSPITALS NHS BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Referred)

HELEN SOMES (Midland & East Coast): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Vice President, Congress, this Congress is aware that on 6th April 2017 the system of bereavement benefit was changed. Widowed Parents Allowance (WPA) was replaced by a Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) that is not automatically uprated in line with inflation and only applied to married couples or civil partnerships. Despite the Government's insistence that these reforms were not intended to save money, the Government will make a net annual saving of £100m as a direct result of these changes. In 91% of cases the time that benefits will be paid will be shortened. Widowed parents with young children are disproportionately disadvantaged. Some claimants could be worse off by as much as £31,000.

In most cases WPA payments were used towards the general living costs of bringing up children. Many families found WPA essential to meet their basic living costs. WPA helped widowed parents to reduce their working hours to be able to spend more time with their children and cover the extra costs of a parent bringing up children alone.

BSP payments stop after 18 months. This reduction significantly impacts on the finances of grieving families. This can result in widowed parents having to work long hours, leaving less time to spend with their grieving children. Negative effects on mental health and educational outcomes are more likely. The strongest predictor of emotional health and well being in bereaved children is the availability and consistent presence of the surviving parent.

I call on this Congress to support a campaign to ensure fairer bereavement payments to stop penalising children for their parent's marital status, and to extend this benefit to cohabiting widows who do not have children. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Secunder?

LINDA LOWNDES (Midland & East Coast): Vice President, Congress, as my colleague, Helen, has outlined, in April 2017 Widows Payment Allowance was

replaced by Bereavement Support Payments. The Tory government said their reforms were not about saving money. Really? Do we really believe that? No, we do not.

BSP payments stop after 18 months but the old WPA payment was paid until child benefit stopped. The deadline for claiming BSP is three months. After three months a claimant loses one month's payment for every month the application is late. The last thing any grieving parent needs is more pressure to fill in complicated forms by unrealistic deadlines. There was no deadline to claim WPA as long as the conditions of entitlement were met, yet another example of Tory compassion. Following challenges the law is soon to be changed to allow unmarried parents to claim BSP. These new amendments will be backdated to August 2018. Remember, BSP was introduced in April 2017, that is a 16-months gap where possible payments could have been made in favour of grieving families. However, it is in favour of the Tory government. Grieving families need compassion and financial assistance in their time of need, not this type of Tory compassion. Please support. I second. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. The mover of Motion 287?

INDUSTRIAL INJURIES BENEFIT SCHEME

MOTION 287

287. INDUSTRIAL INJURIES BENEFIT SCHEME

This Congress acknowledges the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme has been in use since 1948 and provides no-fault compensation for people who are disabled because of an accident at work, or who have one of certain prescribed diseases caused by their work.

The main benefit in the scheme is Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB). Other benefits can be claimed as part of the Scheme, such as Constant Attendance Allowance for people who receive a maximum award of IIDB, and Reduced Earnings Allowance for people affected prior to 1990. Around 25,000 people received IIDB in Scotland in the first quarter of 2018. The vast majority of clients (85%) are male. The number of new cases has been on a general downward trend since 2002.

When the scheme was written the workforce was predominately male so therefore took no account of the predominately female roles that exist today and the vast majority of female members that we have aren't aware of the benefit or if they are entitled to it. The responsibility for this benefit was passed to the Scottish Government in April 2020.

This Congress calls upon GMB to raise the profile of this issue with members to promote the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme, particularly with female members, with the view to launching a National Campaign with the UK Government and the Devolved Nations Administrations, to ensure that women's work and work related injuries and diseases are recognised within the scheme thus enabling them to access this benefit and to ensure that Long Covid is covered in the scheme(s) for those members who contracted Covid whilst at work.

FIFE PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Carried)

ROBERT GRAHAM (GMB Scotland): Vice President, Congress, first-time speaker, second-time delegate. (*Applause*) Thank you. I took my watch off because it was telling me I was really stressed! Congress, in 1948 the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme was launched to provide a no-fault compensation scheme for people who are disabled because of an accident at work, or one of certain prescribed diseases caused by their work. However, colleagues, industry has seen a vast move over the years and those who are employed in those industries, and what services and industries have come into being since that was launched.

It was a predominant culture at that time that only men worked and their wives stayed home to raise children. Many women who had been employed gave up work once they were married as it was deemed the correct thing to do and the normal thing to do at that time. Times have changed.

The scheme was written by men for men. There was no need to include predominantly female jobs as they were few and far apart. Congress, think back to when you started work how many predominantly female roles were there. If you can think back to when the NHS was formed in 1948, coincidentally the same year as the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme was launched, a predominantly female industry but no regard taken as to injuries that could be sustained.

Take a minute, then, to think of the advances made in the nursing profession, for example, and what comes to mind is the introduction of hoists and the advancement of manoeuvring techniques instead of lifting. How many nurses do you know who have had to give up work or their careers through muscular skeletal injuries caused at work. How many of them do you think would be able to claim industrial injuries: none. Nursing probably was not recognised in the scheme. Congress, that is just one example of why this benefit needs to be modernised and made fit for purpose. Have a think about what other predominantly female roles have emerged since 1948, social care and retail, to name but a few.

This benefit was devolved in Scotland in 2020 along with some other social security benefits but has not been acted upon. There was a consultation led by Mark Griffin in the NSP in late 2020 but that is on hold presently due to the Covid focus. Congress, at this time when the effects of long Covid are still unknown how many of our members will be able to access the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme. However, we should not let this deter us from taking this forward.

Congress, I call upon the CEC to raise the profile of this issue with members of the self-organised groups, support the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme, particularly with female members with a view to launching workplace campaigns to ensure that women's work and the work-related injuries and diseases which are recognised within the scheme are improved thus enabling them to access this benefit. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well done, Robert. Secunder?

MARY MULLIGAN (GMB Scotland): Vice President, President, Congress, like so many of the debates held at Congress they are about the issues that women are facing and the progress we are making in our union and society. It is our responsibility to

ensure that we keep up and continue to make advances and achieving equality. On the Industrial Injuries Benefit Scheme progress has faltered. The disablement benefit has failed to move with society, and it has failed to keep up with women working and the industrial injuries we face. This is no truer than in women dominated professions, such as nursing and care. A failure to recognise these disabilities and ailments means that women are being left out. While politicians are using warm words of gender equality, what our members need is the support of a proper social security system as the Scottish government has promised. Any worthwhile social security system must be fit to serve everyone and meet the needs of a modern workforce. The scheme has been devolved to the Scottish parliament and typical of the Scottish government no great emphasis has been placed on widening the criteria or uptake. Rightly we should be calling on all governments in the UK to give the issue attention and encourage uptake, but we also have a responsibility as a union to make our members, especially women, aware of the support that is available to them. Congress, I second the motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Does anyone wish to oppose any of the motions? No? Can I call on Warinder Juss to give the response for the CEC, and also could I call on the movers of motions starting with 240 and ending with 252 to come to the front, please.

WARINDER JUSS (CEC): Vice President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motions 283, 285, 286, and 287.

The CEC supports the aim of Motion 283 but wishes to put a qualification and the qualification being that any campaigning action that the GMB takes and any influence that the GMB has over the nature of the welfare system is likely to be limited. However, the point raised in the motion can be put forward in our engagements with the wider trade union Movement on this policy area.

Regarding Motion 285, again the CEC supports this with a qualification. The GMB has already been making a case to the Government to maintain the £20 uplift on Universal Credit and it was included in our submissions to the Low Pay Commission in 2021. The mover of the motion accepts the CEC qualification so that the GMB actually goes further in supporting a radical overhaul of the Universal Credit benefit system. The reason for this is that people who are amongst our most disadvantaged communities are not stigmatised for falling on hard times through no fault of their own.

Regarding Motion 286 on Bereavement Support Payment, again the CEC welcomes this motion but wishes this motion to be referred so that the CEC can look at the issues raised and consider them further.

Regarding Motion 287, the CEC welcomes the motion and supports it with qualifications. The GMB has already been raising the issue of gender disparity in successful industrial injuries disablement benefit claims and this included a motion to the TUC Women's Conference this year and a similar motion was passed by the National Equality Conference last year, 2021.

However, the motion calls on the union to launch a campaign with the UK government and devolved administrations. The reality of the situation is that GMB is unlikely to run a joint campaign with a UK Tory government. Any campaign that we run that the motion calls for is going to target the government and devolved administrations, and pressurise them to raise awareness of the Industrial Injuries Disabled Benefit, particularly amongst women. Of course, the Tory government is likely to resist our campaign and it is something that GMB will have to overcome, which it will.

So, in conclusion, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 283 and 285, with the qualifications set out. Motion 286 to be referred for the reason set out earlier. Motion 287 to be supported with the qualification set out. Thank you, Congress.
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Warinder. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting Motion 284 and 285 has already been agreed with a qualification, so does London agree the qualification on 283? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Scotland agree the qualification on 287? (*Agreed*) Thank you. That means the CEC is supporting 283, 284, 285, and 287. All those in favour, please show. Any against? Thank you.

*Motion 283 was **CARRIED***

*Motion 284 was **CARRIED***

*Motion 285 was **CARRIED***

*Motion 287 was **CARRIED***

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does the Midland & East Coast agree to refer Motion 286? (*Agreed*) That is referred. Thank you.

*Motion 286 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Just before we take the next set of motions, Congress, I would like to announce a small change to the programme this morning. We have taken a couple of extra items already so we are overrunning slightly and I do mean slightly, therefore we will take Motions 241, 246, 75, and 77, in the afternoon session and I will advise exactly when they will be programmed. However, due to the urgency of the situation I will take Emergency Motion 2 on Deportation to Rwanda as the last item of business before the break, so could the speakers on that motion please be ready after this set. Sorry to the speakers of those four motions, I know you thought you could enjoy your lunch having thought you had already spoken.

SOCIAL POLICY: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of Motion 240. We are now on to Social Policy: Education and Training.

STOP INEQUALITIES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

MOTION 240

240. STOP INEQUALITIES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

This Congress notes GMB's longstanding policy is for University Tuition fees to be abolished, however the pandemic has highlighted other inequalities.

During the pandemic, students were sent home even though they had paid for accommodation costs up front.

They suffered additional financial pressures as they faced loss of employment, additional costs for alternative accommodation, and lack of support to access remote teaching.

We call on GMB to campaign for students to be able to access furlough or other financial support which was made available to businesses.

CAMBRIDGE 2 BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

JOSHUA WADE (London): Hello again, and good morning, Congress. However, before I start, very quickly, I know we are short on time, I just want to say thank you very much for the sign language interpreters and those producing the subtitles who have worked hard to make sure that we can be seen and heard for everyone out there. *(Applause)* Thank you.

So far we have all heard about the devastating effects of Covid-19 on all aspects of our workforce, our lives, and society. However, one group we have not really heard about is students. So far they have been overlooked by society in general. There were no claps for them, or anything else. I say this because they have missed out on the experience of Uni that they strive their whole educational lives for by having to stay in, locked in rooms in generally some of the worst housing conditions you will find in the private sector, with extortionate rents, knowing that about 80% plus of maintenance loans go on that rent to pay someone else's mortgage. So, not only are they isolating in terrible conditions generally speaking, with people they barely know themselves, most likely in a town they do not know, but they are also isolated away from their friends and families and the support networks that we all rely on.

That was, unfortunately, the reality for thousands of students. Not only the fact they have to worry about rent, but most of the time they work in precarious positions in bar work, hospitality, things that we all take for granted, and I know we have some of us this week gone into the bars and frequenting them late at night. Unfortunately, students were either fired or work for cash-in-hand, or in industries where they did not get the furlough loans or financial assistance for their housing.

I would say that going forward this motion is important and significant, not only the fact that students will be able to gain financial aid that they missed out on due to their precarious position in society, and their work, but also for what it symbolises. Students in my generation, and people slightly younger than me and slightly older, are in my view the abandoned generation, brought up from the harvest reaped by the seeds that Thatcher and the austerity government have sowed over the last decade-and-a-half. All we have ever known is austerity. Granted, you could say the New Labour movement but I do not know about anyone else I was a bit too young to even notice any of that when I was growing up. So, all I have ever known is isolation,

individualisation, rising costs, rising house prices, and a lack of care from a government who are there for us, apparently.

That is why I think it is so important for the GMB, and Congress, to get behind this motion and to symbolise to the next generation we are there to support them in solidarity as comrades in order to show them there is a new world that is possible, there is a new richer society that is available across our nations, with shared interests, and to show them there is really hope and prosperity and GMB can lead the way for that as Britain's most general union. We have cheap membership for students, we should really be pushing this, showing them they are not alone, that we are here with them no matter what job or career they go into once they have finished their education, or whilst they are in it. We have been talking about future labour governments and if we fail this upcoming generation congresses like this may get smaller and smaller over the next few years. If we do not push this now, we will regret it later. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joshua. A seconder?

KIM HENDRY (London): Congress, the rising discontent of students and university workers which already existed before the pandemic, was brought to a head during the two years that we suffered under Covid lockdowns. Students are right to be angry. The mover mentioned many of the causes and a form of that anger during the lockdowns and the suffering that students endured was shown when anger erupted initially during the first and second lockdowns when they went on the university rent strikes. That anger was caused by their experience during the pandemic, as Josh mentioned, locked in their rooms, paying sky high rents, exorbitant tuition fees for online learning, but for many students what it also did was highlight the rot at the core of the UK higher education system, faced by years of underfunding and marketisation, where learning becomes a product not an end in itself. They emerge from university with a mountain of debt, tens of thousands of pounds as we all know, which puts off many working class kids who do not have family support behind them to go to university, poor student housing conditions, soaring rents, interest rates on student loan repayments are set to rise still further in September, and then they have to face the cost-of-living crisis.

So, increasingly, the attacks on students, their rights to income during the Covid lockdowns, exacerbated and brought them to a conclusion that there needs to be a fundamental shift in how universities are funded and organised. That is the context within which we are talking about the lack of financial support that they experience. Congress, let's send a message to young members, to all young people, we will fight for their rights to financial support and all the things that come with it, decent housing, no disruption to education, and not to leave education/university with a mountain of debt. I second 240. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kim. Mover of Motion 242?

BARRIERS TO APPRENTICESHIPS

MOTION 242

242. BARRIERS TO APPRENTICESHIPS

This Congress calls on GMB to lobby the 4 UK Governments to remove the minimum requirement and to create a fairer apprenticeship scheme that can be tailored to all. If we are to invest in the future generations, we must insist on modern methods of learning.

As we emerge from the global pandemic, it is clear we are to face, very tough times, with major price increases in everyday living. It is obvious that young people and our future younger members will be hit hardest.

Gaining employment is difficult enough but for young people trying to gain skilled work even harder. The intention of apprenticeships was created to help young people gain experience and skills for quality jobs.

Artificial barriers continue to be put in young people's way. The school curriculum has changed little in over 100 years, with emphasis on intelligence being measured by academic achievements and traditional paper exams. Many of the apprenticeship's schemes require a minimum of 3 GCSE.

We need a modern and inclusive scheme, where all abilities with differing learning modes of learning are encompassed. Let's remove the snobbery of old-fashioned learning and, embrace the 21st century, by allowing ALL young people to have equal education opportunities.

CARDIFF 1 BRANCH C01

Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

GEORGIA CHEDZEY (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, apprenticeships are available to anybody over the age of 16 in the UK although there is a different entry requirement depending on the sector you wish to work in and the job role. However, although they are available they are not currently accessible to all. The National Learning and Work Institute found that there are significant inequalities in access to apprenticeships by income, ethnicity, gender, disability, and caring responsibilities. Apprenticeships, like other jobs, have minimum standards that a candidate must meet to be considered for the role. If we look at an intermediate level apprenticeship this is the equivalent of five GCSEs yet many employers will require a minimum of three GCSEs grade A* to C, even to be considered as an applicant for the job. This limits access for those who do not have these required qualifications.

There is also a risk that apprenticeships are seen as lower level learning than that of more academic routes. This is not the case. If we look at Barclays Bank, for example, the company made a conscious decision to remove the academic entry level requirements as they believed this would open the role out to a more diverse range of applicants. This proved successful and when the apprentice was evaluated it was reported that with the right level of support these recruits would have the same level of success as those who met the previous entry requirements.

Another of the barriers faced is the stigma behind apprenticeships. These are not the perception of the young workers or employers but those perceived by teachers and parents. Investors in People surveyed parents of school leavers and an astonishing 52% of parents believed that an apprenticeship was only for those who wished to work in trade. Unfortunately, an apprenticeship is still viewed as a fallback option, seen as a route that offers less opportunity, respect, and flexibility of learning and will only result in base entry level jobs that do not have the capacity to aspire to degree level roles. We know this simply is not true.

Congress, we believe that employers should be encouraged not to use qualifications as an entry requirement; alternative assessments such as verbal, numerical, and abstract reasoning tests could be employed, along with word-based assessments. Teachers, career advisers, and parents, must be made aware of how an apprenticeship could be the right route for many students and included when talking about post-16 options. More must be done by teachers, parents, and employers to promote and celebrate apprentice progression and share the success stories. We must break down these barriers faced by those who want to undertake an apprenticeship and make learning and access to these roles accessible for all. Please support this motion. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Georgia. A seconder?

SUZANNE WILLIAMS (GMB Wales & South West): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, apprenticeships are one of the most effective means of boosting social mobility for workers. However, the apprenticeship system is failing people from disadvantaged backgrounds and access is limited. New research by the Social Mobility Commission found that workers from disadvantaged backgrounds were being left behind by the system and most benefits were going to those from the more privileged backgrounds. It also demonstrated that women and ethnic minority groups faced higher barriers than others.

The Government needs to invest in the future of apprenticeships by reducing these barriers, by promoting and financially supporting them as much as they do for higher education. The application process needs to be streamlined and schools must be encouraged to give unbiased up-to-date information on the schemes and brought in line with sixth form choices, and not seen as a plan B.

Apprentices should have the same rights to flexible working as those in full or part-time employment and, as such, employers should extend their flexible and part-time working policies to their apprenticeship programmes. No apprentice should be discriminated against during the recruitment process for requesting this. Congress, we need to work with employers and local governments to remove barriers to access apprenticeships for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, push to increase the diversity of the apprenticeship intake and ensure inclusion for all, and use our charter toolkit to support workplaces to ensure all apprentices can complete their qualifications regardless of their background. Congress, please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Suzanne. The mover of Motion 243?

A GOVERNMENT APPRENTICESHIP POLICY FIT FOR PURPOSE

Motion 243

243. A GOVERNMENT APPRENTICESHIP POLICY FIT FOR PURPOSE

This Congress recognises that we need to campaign for a better government Apprenticeship policy as the current scheme is underfunded and has issues surrounding the low quality and patchy regulation of the whole system.

Across the hospitality sectors we are faced with challenges an apprenticeship will help businesses and will help our members to learn on the job to gain the skills and experience for the future.

Currently we have a skills shortage in many areas a Government careers Apprenticeship policy fit for purpose would go a long way to solve this issue.

LONDON HOTELS & CATERING BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

BISMILLAH MOHAMED (London): Good afternoon, Congress, Madam President. *(Applause)* Thanks, guys. First-time in person delegate and speaker. *(Applause)* I did the Zoom last year. We need a government apprenticeship policy fit for purpose. We should recognise that we need a campaign for a better government apprenticeship policy as the current scheme is underfunded and has issues surrounding the low quality and patchy regulation of the whole system. This was written by somebody else and refers to the hospitality sector, which has faced huge challenges during lockdown as businesses were closed and many skilled staff left the industry, and found alternative employment.

As the hospitality sector is one with long hours and poor pay many have not returned so we need to attract new staff, and the right apprenticeship scheme has the potential to bridge the skills gap and bring in more skilled individuals into the industry. It is not just hospitality but other sectors which have been hit hard and a targeted sector apprenticeship policy will help businesses and will help our members to learn on the job to gain skills and experience for the future. We can no longer rely on employer-led apprenticeship training as this is not delivering the high quality vocational skills training that the country needs, so we need a wholesale reform of the current apprenticeship model to make work better for all. We call on Congress to support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bismillah. A seconder? Formally? Thank you, London Region. A mover for Motion 245.

FUNDING FOR SEND PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

MOTION 245

245. FUNDING FOR SEND PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

This Congress recognizes the importance of appropriate provision for children with SEND (Special educational needs and disabilities) in all educational settings.

We acknowledge that schools do not receive the required funding for providing these vital services, in particular the provision of one to one support by Individual Needs Assistants (INA) for those with EHCPs (Educational, Health and Care Plan).

This Congress calls upon the GMB to lobby Local Authorities and the Government to fully fund the staff requirements of these pupils including pay at the appropriate level for this skilled workforce across the education sector.

B50 SUSSEX BRANCH

Southern Region

(Carried)

NICOLETTA PALERMO (Southern): President, Congress, we call upon GMB to lobby local authorities and government to fully fund the staff required for Special Educational Needs pupils, also to pay appropriate rates for the role, recognising the skills and experience of the individual needs assistants. When a child receives an educational healthcare plan this never matches the needs of the child and does not take into account the knowledge and skills of the staff working with that child. This ends up with the member being overworked and stressed.

Children's funding tends to come in blocks and many schools then place children together so one INA can cover a number of children. However, that INA does not receive additional money for supporting challenging groups. The only problem with this is levels of children are different and matching them up to still be getting the right education and support for their different needs is challenging for both the child and the INA. INAs are left in positions where they feel like they are letting the children down yet they themselves are being failed by the system.

The highest band of funding received in my area is £589.32 per month which is only for the most severe and complex needs and is rarely awarded. The children in my school that receive this require full-time one-to-one support, including break times, lunch cover for risk of choking while eating, and also using the toilet. We are a maintained mainstream junior school and this level of support is becoming more prevalent. A full-time INA in my area earns £900 a month. The funding received does not cover the salary, not taking into account the professionalism, knowledge, and experience of the INA.

The majority of children in my area are on funding bands ranging from £143.39 to £375.02. There does not seem to be any clarity on how these amounts are decided. For example, one child at my school is on the lowest band despite an NEP report stating this is not the correct provision and they require specialist support. This child cannot cope with day-to-day changes and is violent towards staff and other pupils. The amount of support they require is only going up. At a recent Jubilee Day they required two adults with them all day to help manage their emotional regulation. Funding does not cover that. It does not even come close to cover one person let alone two.

We call on GMB to lobby for a revised update on SEND rates for children and applying consistent pay bands for SEND teaching assistants to achieve parity across

the country, taking into account the skill, knowledge, and experience, they have. Let's get the children what they need and the members what they deserve. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nicky. A seconder?

CHRIS WRIGHT (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, I am astounded how much this sector is underfunded and how the current government is failing this sector in their educational needs. Twelve years of Tory government has seen austerity bite in the name of saving. Covid hit and we have seen money wasted on poor financial decisions, favoured PPE production contracts, and track-and-trace waste. There is now a drive to save more money.

As we have heard, children who have additional needs in SEND have been let down in terms of finance with a shortfall of about £2bn. This leaves more than a thousand children in the UK receiving no educational needs at all. The government has acknowledged this as a shortfall in funding but has failed to fund anyone or anything more than a half of that shortfall.

Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the financial situation for schools due to PPE costs and they need to duplicate sensory equipment to prevent cross-contamination, none of which has received any additional funding by central government further impacting on the financial crises in this sector and educational needs.

In the Southern Region Surrey Council has overspent in SEND by approximately £35m and other UK councils have spent between £10m and £18m over their budget. Twelve years of Tory austerity and underfunding of special educational needs and disabilities of children have seen an impact in their curricula syllabus, staffing levels and equipment levels, all contributing to the educational shortfall in this sector. GMB has a long history of supporting and advocating those most vulnerable in society and I urge the same for these educational needs. President, Congress, I second this motion. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chris. The mover for Motion 252?

CLOSURE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES

MOTION 252

252. CLOSURE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES

This Congress agrees that the continual closures of children's centres being announced throughout cities will have a devastating effect. The closure of these centres will have a big impact on communities not only for our future generations but for communities now. These centres are lifelines, they help with stability, they not only provide play and education but connection and community spirit and help people to socialise. They help with concerns be it someone struggling with parenting, mental health or not being able to provide their children with simple things like food or a friendly chat and support and many provide family health services and help with employment opportunities. These conservative and independent run councils find it more important to spend money on building car parks and unnecessary projects more than concentrating on towns and cities where the poverty and depression is at its highest, they seem to turn a blind eye to the outcries of their own city's needs. By closing these centres, the councils will expect the community to step in as they always do but with the crisis

of the country and the costs increasing and with everything rising, there is only so much a volunteering community will be able to do when there will be no money to afford to help others due to the rise in the cost of living for everyone as it is already stretched to its limits. Congress we need to act now and campaign to keep these centres open and for the councils to realise the importance of these centres for people's wellbeing, education and stability throughout cities.

S75 STOKE UNITY BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

LISA McCREADY (Birmingham & West Midlands): President, Congress, the continual closure of children's centres announced throughout cities will have a devastating effect. The closure of such centres will have a significant impact on our communities now and for future generations. These centres are pivotal to local communities in offering help and stability to those less fortunate, providing play, education, connection, and boosting community spirit. They help people to socialise. They help with all aspects of parenting, supporting mental health issues, and provide a safe place for families to support their children and engage with others in similar situations. Sometimes a family chat is all that is needed.

The current Conservative councils are more interested in spending money on building car parks and unnecessary projects. This needs to change and a focus put on investing in communities where poverty and depression is at its highest, and listening to the outcries of its own communities. By closing these centres the councils will expect the communities to step in as they always do, but with the cost-of-living crisis there is only so much a community can do. It is time for change. Congress, we need to act now and campaign to keep these centres open, for councils to realise their priority should be local communities and people's wellbeing. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lisa. Secunder? Formally? No, we have a speaker, seconding 252?

JOY HOLNESS (Birmingham & West Midlands): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Since 2015, the Early Years Intervention Grant has been cut by £680m. Since 2010 over a decade of cuts to the Early Years funding has seriously let down our young children. Early Years provision is extremely vital for community cohesion, advice, and guidance to parents. In addition, this service ensured young children learn social skills, basic multi skills and prepare them for reception and beyond. This self-defeating practice will inevitably create a ticking time-bomb for us and our future generations. Polly Toynbee in August 2020 said, "Closing of children's services is the opposite to levelling up." The same "*Children are our future*" slogan should be changed to "*How do we now see our children's future*".

Our youngsters have taken the heavy cuts from benefits, Early Years funding, school cuts, and loss of vital services, but these services are essential and vital to protect them. We need to keep them open for children's health, stability, and wellbeing. Sadly, 58% more children are now at risk and on child protection plans. Social workers are overworked, overstretched, under-resourced, and overwhelmed. Labour

councils are just as guilty reducing these services. Congress, we need to lobby, agitate, and organise to keep these centres open to improve wellbeing and education throughout the country. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joy. Anyone wish to oppose any of those motions? No? In that case, the CEC is supporting all these motions. There is no need for a CEC speaker so we can move straight to the vote. All those in favour of 240, 242, 243, 245 and 252 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 240 was **CARRIED***
*Motion 242 was **CARRIED***
*Motion 243 was **CARRIED***
*Motion 245 was **CARRIED***
*Motion 252 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: As I said, we are moving Motions 241, 246, 75, and 77, to this afternoon so that means we can move on to Emergency Motion 2, Oppose Refugee Deportation to Rwanda and I hope you all heard the news this morning that the European Court of Human Rights has ruled and stopped the deportation. (*Applause*) I ask London Region to move.

OPPOSE REFUGEE DEPORTATION TO RWANDA
EMERGENCY MOTION 2
EMERGENCY MOTION TWO
OPPOSE REFUGEE DEPORTATION TO RWANDA

Congress notes that on the 14 April 2022, Home Secretary Priti Patel announced that the UK and Rwanda would sign a deal allowing the UK Government to send unprocessed immigrants to Rwanda. On the 10 April 2022, the High Court refused an application to stop the Government's planned removal of people seeking asylum by offshoring them to Rwanda despite the UN warning the Home Office off the likely illegality. This decision was unsuccessfully appealed on 13 June 2022 at the Court of Appeal.

The move to offshore those seeking asylum is racist, breaches human rights and our international duties to welcome refugees which are embedded in treaty commitments.

We instruct the CEC to raise awareness of the High Court's decision ensuring our members working in detention centres and work ancillary to the detention centres are informed of the justice and rights of those in their care.

Congress agrees to support the actions of any members in the detention centres and other impacted businesses if they choose to refuse to perform work effecting the deportations

Congress calls on GMB supported MPs to campaign to reverse this programme, and for the Labour Party to oppose any parliamentary resolutions enabling this programme. They must recognise that many/most of the transportees are unprocessed asylum seekers fleeing threats of death and war.

BRANCH: London Central General Branch
REGION London Region

BISMILLAH MOHAMED (London): Madam President, Congress, me again! The Rwanda asylum plan was agreed between Priti Patel and the Rwanda government to identify any immigrants or asylum seekers and relocate them to Rwanda and, hopefully, if this is seen to work it would stop more coming by boat or other means. Asylum seekers and immigrants are not new to us in the Labour Movement. They are definitely not illegal immigrants. No one is illegal.

We have a history of fighting for humanity and solidarity. This government has a responsibility to set a positive tone and positive message that asylum seekers can bring assets to this country. Many are highly motivated people with much needed skills. Make no mistake, Congress, asylum seeker policies adopted by this government have their origin in a place that is a hair's breadth away from outright racism. Congress, we should not seek to copy their policies, policies that pander to racism.

Whilst the first flight did not take off yesterday, it cost the taxpayer half a million pounds to sit on the tarmac. Be assured that the government has plenty more planes lined up and plenty more companies unscrupulous enough to volunteer to take on this transportation. Furthermore, why Rwanda? The UNHCR has serious concerns about the Rwandan asylum process and the inadequate protection that would be offered to those seeking safety. They have been given many examples of Rwanda's ineffective asylum system and the risks faced by refugees. In 2018, at least 12 refugees were killed by the police and over 60 imprisoned at a protest about inadequate food rations.

Yesterday, London Region wrote to the Chief Executive of Privilege Airlines to call for them to withdraw from the scheme and cancel the flights. The airline is publicly endorsing the Government's decision to abandon their duties under the Refugee Convention.

Instead, we should work with our supported MPs, the Labour Party, and other trade unions to campaign to oppose such anti-racist acts and treat these asylum seekers with dignity and respect as they flee their countries under threat of death and war. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bismillah. A seconder?

UNA BYRNE (London): Comrades, we are a union of migrants and descendants of migrants. We are internationalists. We are anti-racists. We are anti-fascists. Solidarity is our weapon. Collective action is the means. Britain has been made great by the labour of migrants and the exploitation of the international working class. These flights to Rwanda are a disgrace and are the violent expression of white supremacy and class oppression.

We are heartened to hear that direct action at Colnbrook Detention Centre in Wiltshire alongside legal action successfully halted last night's flight. We take inspiration from working class communities in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Hackney, and Peckham, who have also in recent months successfully prevented, through direct action, the kidnapping of their neighbours by police and immigration forces. *(Applause)*

The trade unions as the organ of the organised working class are uniquely placed to resist and organise against these racist policies. The flights to Rwanda and the forcible removal of refugees and migrants is the very antithesis of what we believe in and what we stand for. It is the duty of this union and every single one of us who call ourselves trade unionists, to actively challenge and confront these fascist practices. We must use our network and political influence to stop these racist deportations. *(Applause)*

We must use the union's resources to confront these attacks on working class people of colour. Many of these people have survived war, poverty, and imperialism. We cannot allow the British state to further brutalise them. We must also support all those who take action to stop these racist flights.

We are the organised working class, these are our people, we cannot accept this: an injury to one is an injury to all. I urge each and every one of you to do all that you can to ensure that any future deportation flights are stopped and ensure our siblings from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, are not forcibly removed to Rwanda. Please support this motion. I second. *No pasaran! (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Una. I have to ask this, does anyone wish to oppose the motion? Can I ask Colin Gunter to respond for the CEC.

COLIN GUNTER (CEC): The CEC welcomes Emergency Motion 2, Oppose Refugee Deportation to Rwanda. It is despicable that the British government is treating those who are fleeing desperate conditions with such inhumanity. The CEC agrees that offshoring those who seek asylum is racist. That breaches human rights and flies in the face of any international duties we have signed up to. It is a reactionary, cowardly, dangerous decision of a government that have absolutely no compassion or ideas left.

This ordeal must be harrowing for those seeking asylum. We applaud any one of our members who protests against the deportation of these human beings. It is our responsibility as a movement to protect lives no matter who you are or where you come from.

The CEC is supporting Emergency Motion 2 with a qualification, the qualification being that we support members with appropriate legal advice on any action planned and members should have ongoing engagement with their region to ensure there is proper consultation with the entire membership affected. Congress, please support this qualification.. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. London Region, do you accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you, London Region. I can put Emergency Motion 2 to the vote. All those in favour? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Emergency Motion 2 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, everyone. *(Applause)* That concludes the morning session. Please go away and enjoy the fringe events and the exhibitions, and I will see you again promptly at 2 o'clock.

Congress adjourned.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Conference reconvened at 2.00 p.m.

THE PRESIDENT: I call Congress to order. Just before we start, can I wish Julie O'Connor from the North West & Irish Region, a happy and significant birthday.
(Applause)

Joining us this afternoon on the top table is Graham Dow, our new head of Finance. Graham took over the position from Allan Wylie who retired late last year. I would like to welcome Graham to his first Congress in this important position. Welcome.
(Applause)

Before we start our afternoon session, there will be SOC Report Number 7, moved by the Chair of the SOC, Helen Johnson.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 7

HELEN JOHNSON: I am Helen Johnson, Midland & East Coast Region, Standing Orders Committee Chair, moving SOC Report 7.

The SOC has been notified that the following motions have been withdrawn by the regions concerned: Motion 25, Monitoring of Congress Decisions of Branch Income from Birmingham & West Midlands Region; and Motion 36, Reduction to Honoraria Payments from Northern Region.

Regarding the bucket collection, the amount collected for Fit Mums and Friends at lunch time today was £359.14p. *(Applause)* President, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 7.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Does anybody wish to speak on any of the SOC's recommendations. *(No response)* No. I will put it to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? SOC Report No. 7 is adopted.

*SOC Report No. 7 was **ADOPTED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, as we had run over slightly this morning we are going to continue with business where we had left off before lunch. So we will be continuing this afternoon with motions on Social Policy Education and Training, and Employment Policy Equality and Inclusion. I ask movers and seconders of Motions 241 and 246 to make yourselves ready.

SOCIAL POLICY: EDUCATION & TRAINING

APPRENTICE ACADEMIES

MOTION 241

241. APPRENTICE ACADEMIES

This Congress believes that a well-trained, skilled workforce is essential both for the future of manufacturing and for the UK economy. In the past, many employers recruited apprentices

and used dedicated training centres within the workplace. However, many places no longer have training centres. In order to rectify this, Congress believes Apprentice Academies should be set up. Apprentice Academies would be used to teach and train apprentices to a high level, giving them the skills needed in the workplace. This would ensure a continuous stream of skilled workers for UK manufacturing, boosting the UK economy. These should be part funded by unused monies from the Apprenticeship Levy, rather than the money going to the HMRC, as present.

Congress, therefore, calls on the GMB to campaign for unused money from the Apprenticeship Levy not to go to the HMRC but, to be used to create Apprentice Academies.

PARKGATE BRANCH Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

JAMES COFFIELD (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I move Motion 241: Apprentice Academies. I'm a first-time delegate and speaker. *(Applause)* All employers require a well-trained workforce to achieve targets and goals. Training should be the core of every successful business to maximise the quality of the product or service that they are supplying to the customer. The Government introduced the Apprenticeship Levy scheme in order to address this struggling sector. Whilst we had some concerns about the levy itself, we believed it was created with good intentions but sadly we all know that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Rather than for the benefit of the whole economy, the levy itself is used by the employer who pays it. At the end of the year the employer then has a choice of using up any of the remaining money potentially on things of dubious value or, in most cases, seeing that funding clawed back by HMRC. Surely, it would be more beneficial for the economy and all employers if all of the money from the levy was used to ensure that vital and necessary skills are taught in the correct manner by trained professionals in their chosen fields. The best way to ensure that these skills are passed on to our future generations is by the creation of Apprentice Academies. These academies would function partly as training centres, much like previous technical colleges, and provide those employers who lack the facilities to develop their employees with essential and necessary training and knowledge. These facilities would further benefit all employers and strengthen the economy.

As a previous apprentice myself, I realise more and more how vital the need is going to be in the next coming years for knowledgeable and key workers to recover the economy following the terrible decisions made during the pandemic. These trained workers will be needed to raise this country back to its once unrivalled prowess in production and success. I am sure we are all in agreement that unused levy money should go towards the building of apprentice academies and further our chances of creating a more skilled and effective workforce for future generations rather it falling into the hands of HMRC and into the hands of Cabinet Ministers' mates through dodgy contracts. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have a seconder, please.

IAN KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I second Motion 241. For all those people who have known me over the years, first-time and last-time speaker at this Conference. *(Applause)*

President and Congress, the lame duck – sorry, Boris Johnson – said he wants a highly-skilled, well-paid workforce. Being trade unionists, as Bellinda Carlisle said, we want the same thing. Yet what does he and his Government do? Nothing! Instead, we are relying on the Apprentice Levy. Whilst I support anything that results in training at work, what we've got is not a surfeit of fitters, electricians or whatever skilled workers, but we've got apprenticeships in flipping burgers! When we want maintenance workers, we've ended up with McDonald's.

It's time now that we got back to proper apprenticeships, using the Apprentice Levy to at least part fund apprentice academies.

Comrades, I've got a confession to make. Even though I wrote this motion, the origins of this motion don't lie with myself, my branch or even the region. Instead it comes from an idea we had a couple of years ago in discussions in the Shipbuilding & Steel Lay Activists' Committee. These are people who know what they are talking about when it comes to training and getting a skilled workforce, and these are people who can convince me that this is what is needed. It is not some bureaucrat, it's not some Tory Minister, but it's those fitters, platers, welders and, yes, boilermakers *(Applause)* who I am proud to sit alongside with, who I am proud to work with and who I am proud to call GMB members and proud to call comrades, brothers and friends. Congress, through the judgment of our skilled members, let's reclaim what apprenticeships are about. Let's have our young people properly trained. Let's get apprentice academies! *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ian. I call the mover of Motion 246.

REVIEW OF FIRST AID TRAINING MOTION 246

246. REVIEW OF FIRST AID TRAINING

This Congress recognises that First Aid/Schools Nurse Training be reviewed to include sickle cell and thalassemia disease awareness in schools

Congress notes that School Nurses have confirmed that they have not received training. Sickle cell and thalassemia are both terminal diseases and it is unfair that people diagnosed should have to pay for their medication. This disease affects people that are Black, Asian, Indian and Mediterranean and the impact it has on people can be severe, as far as life threatening. We are calling upon parents, MP's, Councillors to support this motion to ensure this vital training is put in place as it can save children's lives.

L26 LB WANDSWORTH BRANCH **Southern Region**

(Carried)

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): I am moving Motion 246, L26 LB Wandsworth Branch. I am still a first-time delegate but I am speaking for the third time.

(Applause) This is the Review of First Aid Training. It is about including in first aid training that everybody knows about sickle cell and thalassemia disease.

This Congress recognises that first aid/school nurse training needs to be reviewed to include sickle cell and thalassemia disease awareness in schools, and across the spectrum including employees who are required to undertake first aid training as part of their jobs.

Congress notes that school nurses have confirmed that they have not received training for sickle cell and thalassemia, which are both terminal diseases. Those who are diagnose with the diseases are still unfairly treated by having to pay for their life-saving medication. Both of these diseases affect people from black, Asian, Indian and Mediterranean origin, and the impact it has on people can be severe, as far as life threatening. Approximately 15,000 people in the UK have sickle cell disorder. Almost 300 babies are born in the UK with sickle cell each year. Children with sickle cell disease are at increased risk of stroke, and the risk is at its highest between the ages of two and 16. SCD can affect anyone, although it predominantly affects people from African and Caribbean backgrounds. Everything can be verified on the sicklecellsociety.org website.

Thalassemia is no longer confined to people from certain ethnicities. In fact, it is estimated that 700,000 babies are severely affected by thalassemia are born globally each year.

England is now the only part of the UK that charges for prescriptions, those charges having been abolished in Wales in 2007, in Northern Ireland in 2010 and Scotland in 2011. People with thalassemia have to pay for their life-long prescriptions for iron chelation and other medications, despite it being life saving.

We are calling upon MPs and councillors to support this motion to ensure this vital training is put in place as it can save children's lives. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Maria. You are an old hand now at speaking. Secunder?

SYLVESTER IJIEH (Southern): Congress, my beautiful and lovely people. I am from St. George's branch. I am seconding Motion 246: Review of First Aid Training in schools to include sickle cell and thalassemia diseases. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Oh my God! What a Conference! I am very happy. Can I seek permission of the President just to say one thing. I am the president for the G50 branch where you guys are aware that we are having a dispute. I want to thank you for standing in solidarity with my members. God bless the whole of you. I know we are going to succeed. Up the GMB! *(Applause)*

As Congress recognises, these two diseases are life threatening and mostly affect the BEM ethnic groups in our society, which mainly ranges from ages two to 16. It is of paramount importance for employers to be regularly organise first-aid training for their employees who are working in this section so as to enable them to effectively

manage those who are diagnosed. With the cost of living rising by the hour, those diagnosed with these diseases will be hard pressed financially as they can hardly afford to pay the cost of the drugs for these life-threatening diseases. I urge Conference to call on our MPs to lobby Parliament to abolish the payments for prescriptions in England and Wales, but not in Ireland or Scotland.

According to statistics, 15,000 people in the UK live with sickle cell and almost 300 babies born in the UK each year are diagnosed with these dreadful diseases. There is no better time than now for GMB to hold employers to implement GMB policies on health and safety to enable employees carrying out their duties effectively for a stitch in time saves nine.

Finally, I am calling on MPs and local councillors to support this request of our hard-working members in this sector to remember that little things are little things, but the effectiveness of little things are very great. I urge Congress to support this motion.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sylvester. Does anyone wish to oppose either of these motions? *(No response)* No. Then can I ask Farzanna Jumma from the CEC to response.

FARZANNA JUMMA (CEC): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motions 241 and 246. On Motion 241 the CEC is seeking to support this motion with two qualifications. The first is to make clear that trade union consultation and access should be a fundamental requirement for the creation of Apprentice Academies. The second is to note that the Apprenticeship Levy in its current form is a failed policy.

The number of apprenticeship starts has fallen in each year since the levy was introduced in each year since the levy was introduced and too many apprenticeships are merely another form of exploitative labour. The CEC does not wish to commit the GMB to supporting the current apprentice levy policy. Instead, we support the call for unused money from this levy to fund the creation of apprentice academies.

On Motion 246 the CEC is generally in support of awareness training on medical issues that children might be facing within their schools. The CEC is supporting this motion with three qualifications. Firstly, we do not support medical care being administered without agreement, training or compensation. Complex medical care should be administered by medical professionals. Secondly, where there are school nurses, they will be registered nurses and, therefore, should have a qualified understanding of blood disorders. Finally, this must be limited to awareness raising and there should not be any expectation for school staff or school first aiders to be able to diagnose blood disorders in children.

The CEC is, therefore, asking Congress to support Motion 241 and Motion 246 with the qualifications that I have set out. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzanna. Does Yorkshire accept the qualification on Motion 241? *(Agreed)* Thank you for accepting. Does Southern accept the qualifications on Motion 246? *(Agreed)* Thank you for accepting. I can put those to

the vote. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. All those against? They are both carried.

*Motion 241 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 246 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Employment Policy: Equality & Inclusion. I call the mover of Motion 75.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: EQUALITY & INCLUSION

END UNDERPAYMENT OF APPRENTICES

MOTION 75

75. END UNDERPAYMENT OF APPRENTICES

This Congress notes that the BEIS survey for apprentices in 2018-2019 showed apprentices were being cheated out of their pay by employers not paying them the correct National Minimum wage rate (apprentices in 16-24 age bracket 22% of them were being underpaid compared with 2016).

47% of Under 19's on a level two or level three apprenticeship are paid below the Apprentice minimum wage. The minimum wage for apprentices is appallingly low; and employers are finding new tactics in exploiting young workers.

Apprenticeships, where good pay, terms and conditions are rare, including a job opportunity at the end of the apprenticeship. GMB has an apprentice charter, but it is currently underused

Conference believes:

- Everyone should be paid fairly for the work they do.
- People should be paid equally for the same job regardless of age, gender or race.
- Employers should not be cheating the lowest earners in society out of their wages.
- The Apprenticeship minimum wage is too low which allows employers to hire apprentices as cheap labour, without offering them a permanent position or practice shoddy workplace practices.

Conference resolves:

- Calls for an end to the chronic underpayment of apprentices and to call on the UK Government to prosecute employers who do not pay the legal minimum.
- To lobby the Labour Party to commit to paying apprentices fairly with fair terms and conditions, as well as secure employment for apprentices once they complete the apprenticeship.
- Reaffirm our commitment to good apprenticeships with GMB's apprentice charter.
- Reaffirm our commitment to an industrial strategy that recruits apprentices.

ASDA JOINT BRANCH A50 Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

CAROL ESTEBANEZ (GMB Wales & South West): I move Motion 75: End Underpayment of Apprentices. Congress, we all know that apprenticeships are a structured programme of training consisting of paid employment and learning. They give people the opportunity to work for an employer and to learn on the job, enabling them to build up knowledge and skills whilst gaining a recognised qualification within a specific occupation or trade.

However, according to the Government's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who commissioned a report, they stated that apprentices are the largest group of underpaid workers, with 16 year-olds being on £4.81 and 18 to 20 year-olds on £6.83. Many reasons were stated for this, one underlying cause being the failure to pay apprentices for their offsite training days. According to the survey in Wales, the report went on to say that of those who were asked, 22% did receive at least one day a week of formal training and were more likely to have received payment for that day. However, 16% did not get the regular formal training and did not receive payment for the days when they were away from the workplace on offsite training.

This highlights the reluctance to pay apprentices for the time they spend on formal training thus pushing up non-compliance amongst this group. Unfortunately, this group are among some of the youngest of the workers and who are least likely to report this underpayment. The number of complaints received remains small next to the estimated number of underpaid workers, which suggests either low awareness of rights or a widespread reluctance to engage in the complaints procedure, or perhaps a little of both.

Comrades, this is where we, as a Union, need to step in and support our underpaid apprentices. We have the knowledge and resources and by working with ACAS and HMRC we can change this trend. Congress, quite simply, we need to promote the GMB Apprenticeship Charter and circulate the new organising material. We must use our influence with employers and local governments to educate and clearly communicate the errors of the underpayment of apprentices. Where those rogue employers fail to act, we need to ensure that they are called out and held accountable. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Carol. Secunder?

GAVIN GALLEOZZIE (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, I am seconding Motion 75: Apprenticeships. I thought the mover was absolutely excellent. It is tough to second that because everything was true and right. Apprentices matter. They are the future and it is important that they get fair pay for the work that they do.

I am going to be a little naughty and go slightly off script, if I may. Obviously, we know the motion. Apprentice pay is crucial. They should be paid equally and fairly. Like I said, they are the future of our country. Now I will get to something a little bit cheeky, Congress. Two days ago I spoke at this podium and, if you remember, I asked you to bang tables and clap hands, which you all did. Thank you for that, by the way. Please support this motion.

I want you to do something else. I want everybody to just sit down, relax for a second and remember what we have done for the last couple of years because we were

confined to our own homes. Now we are *here* in person! What you have done is special. You have kept backing your members, in spite of everything. Whatever has been thrown at you, you have kept back in your members. Congress, look at the person next to you. Hug each other and back this motion. GMB is still *here*. We are still going, we are still strong and I predict a riot! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gavin, for that. I call the mover of Motion 77.

FAIR PAY FOR ALL
MOTION 77

77. FAIR PAY FOR ALL

This Congress notes that the pandemic has shone a light on the inequalities of our workplaces and society.

Previous research conducted by Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE) on the gender pay gap provided a detailed analysis into factors causing the gender pay gap and sought to understand the ways in which gender pay disparities are consistently reproduced in workplaces. It also provided recommendations on how to halt this and has been invaluable in enabling employers to address this inequality.

Congress further notes that there is also a significant disability and race pay gap across Wales, but that evidence is poor and further research is required.

Congress believes workers should be treated fairly, and receive fair pay regardless of their gender, race or disability.

Congress calls upon the TUC to campaign for:

- In-depth research into the race and disability pay gaps in order to identify the causes and make recommendations to address these
- Place a duty on employers to report their gender, race and disability pay gap regardless of the number of employees and to demonstrate how they will address any gaps identified
- Robust monitoring and enforcement of this reporting

This Congress believes that our trade union should lead the way on pay parity and calls upon the GMB to:

- Encourage Branches to work with their employers to undertake pay surveys in their own organisations and devise strategies to address any gaps identified
- Facilitate training for workplace representatives and officers

SOUTH WALES POLICE STAFF BRANCH S62
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

MAXINE BUTLER (GMB Wales & South West): President and Congress, I move Motion 77 on Fair Pay for All. Congress, it is an immense pleasure to be back here with you all in person. Since we last met in person the world has changed immensely. Despite most of us being locked away at home for the last three years, it seems that so much has happened with time whizzing by, but being at home allowed most of us an opportunity to re-evaluate our lives. We re-evaluated what was important, how and where we want to live and we realised that some of the stuff that we thought was important did not matter any more. But it has also let us re-evaluate who was important to us and not just on a personal level.

When lockdown began it was a wake-up call to show who matters in our economy. The UK Government called for essential workers to go out to work to keep our country ticking over. There were the usual faces; doctors, emergency workers, police and the military, but then there were the unexpected ones, such as refuse workers, delivery drivers, bus drivers, kitchen staff, jobs that silently have kept our country ticking over for decades. These jobs were public facing, often requiring close contact with individuals, like in care work or based in enclosed spaces, like driving buses, all of which put them at enhanced risk. But they answered the call and in those tough circumstances they dragged Britain through the worst of the pandemic. Let's not forget the scandal that saw them working in the early days and many were expected to work without PPE. Congress, many of them died, all for poor wages. To this day these workers have not been properly compensated for the risks they took. The truth is that this pandemic has shone a light on how our economy works and we need to realise that, actually, some of the people who deserve better pay just don't get it. These jobs are disproportionately filled by women, BAME and workers with disabilities. In short, those who have already been hit by a system took another hammer blow. Congress, I'm fed-up with talking about the gender pay gap. This is not an inevitably thing that we have to live our lives accepting. It is time to double down and make a history. It is not just the gender pay gap but the ethnicity pay gap and the disability pay gap. Congress, it is time to change the game. It is time for employers to up their game and publicly engage by reporting their pay gaps and taking action to drive them down. All trade unions should do everything in our power to ensure that employers publish and enact to make fair pay for all a reality. Let's change the game. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maxine. Secunder?

PHILIP ROGERS (GMB Wales & South West): Congress and President, I am seconding Motion 77: Fair Pay for All. Congress and President, we call on the GMB to work with the TUC to campaign to address and bring an end to the pay disparity by placing a duty on employers to report their gender, race and disability pay gaps, no matter the size of the company and organisation. We must work with the employers to agree an action plan and policy to help them move forward in addressing the issues, conduct more in-depth research around pay gaps across all of the protected characteristics, asking questions around race, disability as well as how to use that data effectively, educate and advise employers on the Equality Act, open up opportunities for training and progression in the workplace, working in partnerships with groups such as WAVE, Qualitage and fair pay foundations.

We must also empower our driving force of amazing workplace reps, not only create a toolkit to enable them to effectively talk about the pay gaps with employers, but to provide support and training on forging good relations with employers, devising strategies, surveys and leading on campaigns giving them the best possible way forward, thus tackling this ever-growing issue. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Philip. Does anyone wish to oppose either of those motions? *(No response)* No. Then I ask Anne Dean from the CEC to respond.

ANNE DEAN (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motion 75. The CEC supports the calls made in this motion. Our qualifications are, firstly, that the Apprenticeship Charter and organising materials associated with it will need to be revised. Secondly, the CEC believes that we should target efforts to improve apprenticeships in the workplace in which we organise. So the CEC is, therefore, asking Congress to support Motion 75 with those qualifications. That is the quickest speech I have ever made, folks. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Anne, and I made you wait until this afternoon to do it as well. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 75? *(Agreed)* Thank you for accepting. The CEC is supporting Motion 77. So all those in favour, please show? Anyone against? They are both carried.

Motion 75 was CARRIED.

Motion 77 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I want to thank those speakers for holding on until this afternoon. This afternoon we will be debating business relating to the Union's finances. We will first debate Composite 4 and Motions 51, 54 and 56. I will then ask the General Secretary to respond to these motions with the CEC positions, and move the annual accounts. No questions were received by the Monday deadline on the accounts.

Once the Accounts have been moved, I will move to the vote on Composite 4, Motions 51, 54 and 56 and the Annual Accounts.

After those, we will then debate the Special Report on Branch Commissions and motions remaining which relate to branchy commissions, but I will explain how that debate will happen when we get to that business. If you are due to speak, please make sure you are ready and make sure you speak to time. Thank you.

UNION ORGANISATION: FINANCES & CONTRIBUTIONS

GMB CONTRIBUTION RATES; SLIDING SCALE SYSTEM AND LOWER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PART TIME AND TERM TIME ONLY WORKERS
COMPOSITE 4

C4. GMB Contribution Rates; Sliding Scale System and Lower Contributions for Part Time and Term Time only Workers

Covering Motions:

46. CONTRIBUTION RATES - NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION

47. GMB SUBSCRIPTION – SLIDING SCALE SYSTEM - NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION

49. LOWER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PART TIME AND PART TERM TIME ONLY WORKERS - YORKSHIRE & NORTH DERBYSHIRE REGION

This Congress notes that the GMB membership system does not suitably reflect the financial constraints on existing memberships and that of potential members.

There are many people who only work a few hours a week paid the minimum wage and are expected to pay £8.40 a month which is a big unaffordable slice out of their small budget. We have members who work as low as 5 hours per week, and they pay 'grade 2' fees of £8.40 a month. This is equivalent to a member who works up to 20 hours per week. The same applies to 'Grade 1' members. For example, we have members who work 21 hours and pay the equivalent to a member who works 37+ hours at a rate of £14.57. This seems unjust. The biggest issue in trying to recruit staff in schools is that as they are paid on the lowest rate of SCP1 £9 an hour, if they work 10 hours + a week they pay £8.40 for their union membership. If they are paid term time only and work 10 hours a week their monthly pay will be reduced from £360 before deductions to around £288 per month as it is spread over 52 weeks, not the 38-39 weeks they work.

How can it be right that a person on less than £300 a month pays the same as a person on over a £1000 a month?

We have difficulty in recruiting staff who work in schools such as cleaners, general kitchen staff out of schools' clubs as due to their small wage they have to look at the cost and not the benefits.

These groups of staff in schools and elsewhere are the people we need to be supporting to improve their working and living standards, a reduction in our membership fee would not only get these low paid staff our support, it would also our reps in recruiting them.

This motion asks that we explore ways of not only offering a fairer membership offer to existing members but also look at innovative and creative ways of engaging new members by offering a membership system that reflects individuals' circumstances be it full or part time, low paid, gig economy workers, apprentices, and a meaningful community membership rate.

Our sister unions do have different rates which helps them to recruit low paid staff, our alternative membership fees do not cover the majority of the low paid 0-20 hours workers and our fees stop them joining, as bills and food are their main priorities, and workplace protection and better pay come second.

The cost of living crisis is on the rise and we need to act now to keep our existing members.

This Congress calls on the CEC to look at lowering the contributions for part time staff who work less than 20 hours.

Congress asks that GMB establish a task force to examine new alternatives and consider solutions such as a subscription based on a sliding scale, the lowest paid on the lowest scale and we need to consider hours worked.

This Congress asks for a review of contribution rates, which is long overdue.

Congress should, as a matter of urgency, look to set up:-

Sliding Scale Rates

Family Membership

An annual payment from Retired Life Members, of a nominal fee.

We cannot seek to provide ongoing support and benefits for members on the current systems.

Moving Region: YORKSHIRE & N DERBYSHIRE

Seconding Region: NORTH WEST & IRISH

(Referred)

ROSALEEN McKENNA (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Good afternoon, Congress, President and delegates. I am from L10 Branch, Leeds School Support Staff, moving Composite 4: Lower Contributions for Part Time and Term Time Only Workers.

Congress, how can it be right that a person on less than £300 a month pay the same as a person on over £1,000 a month? We have members on spinal points 1 and 2 on minimum wage who work as low as five and under 20 hours a week during term time only. This means being paid 38 weeks out of 52 weeks on minimum wage pro rata. Their membership fees are £8.40 at the moment. Those who work over 21 hours per week term time only pay the equivalent of a member who works 37 hours plus at a rate of £14.57. This is unjust. Union membership should be available to all, to the very lowest paid and the hours worked pro rata.

This Congress notes that the GMB membership system does not suitably reflect the financial constraints on existing memberships and that of potential members. As a workplace rep, I have seen first hand that recruiting potential members – for example, cleaners, lunch time supervisors, kitchen staff and other carers, such as support staff for out-of-school hours clubs – who are valued and some of the most important people in our schools, and their difficulties to afford union membership are now, is very difficult, especially in today's living crisis, as food and bills are the main priorities.

They can see the benefits of having workplace protection and someone to represent them from unscrupulous management, who are aware that some of the workforce cannot afford membership fees. These workers are open to exploitation in the workplace. These highly valued cohort of potential members are open to unfair working terms and conditions, who may be unaware of their rights and often have language barriers. Unfortunately, this is coming second, third or even lower down their budgets as a necessity and affordability. We promote equality and inclusion in education. Why would we not show this to our lowest paid and valuable workers in all of our schools and making membership affordable and accessible, thereby giving protection in the workplace for all? This would also help our reps in recruiting by offering a sliding scale.

This motion asks that we explore ways of not only offering a fairer membership offered to existing members but also to look at innovative and creative ways of engaging new members by offering a membership system that reflects individual circumstances, be it full or part time, low paid, gig economy workers, apprentices and a meaningful community membership rate.

This Congress calls on the CEC to look at lowering the contributions for part-time staff who work less than 20 hours.

Congress asks that GMB establish a task force to examine new alternatives and consider solutions such as a subscription based on a sliding scale, the lowest paid on the lowest scale and we need to consider hours worked.

This Congress asks for a review of contribution rates, which is long overdue. Congress should, as a matter of urgency, look to set up: sliding scale rates. We cannot seek to provide ongoing support and benefits for members on the current systems.

Congress, remember equality and inclusion. Please support this important motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rosaleen. The seconder, please.

PAUL RICHARDS (North West & Irish): Colleagues, before I speak on this motion, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to Barbara for reminding Congress of the motion that was passed in 2017: Total Eclipse of the *Sun*. This rag has no place anywhere and it certainly doesn't have any place in our proud GMB family. *(Applause)* Now, back to work.

President and Congress, I am seconding Composite 4. Congress, my branch submitted a motion to back monthly subscriptions on a sliding scale, and I am thankful to see that it has now reached this platform. Whilst the branch stewards and I have been out and about conducting workplace visits, it has been brought to our attention that some members have been reflecting on their membership and querying if they can accord to remain a member of the GMB due to financial hardship. As an example, a member raised her concerns that whilst she worked only a few hours a week, she is expected to pay a monthly fee similarly to a colleague who works 20 hours per week. There appears to be a discrepancy across the spectrum. Therefore, I believe a decision needs to be made to make the sliding scale fairer, to meet the financial constraints that our members are currently facing and we need to act now.

I highlighted my worries on this subject at our GMB national pay talks. On many occasions I have suggested that taskforce groups be set up. We need to scrutinise the current membership fees and agree on how we can move forward and set our dues based on a sliding scale. Therefore, we are requesting that the CEC organise and set up a task force group and invite one or two representatives from all regions to be involved in this process. This will enable GMB colleagues to share ideas and come up with a solution that can be agreed on and put in place as soon as possible. Thank you. *(Applause)* Thank you, Paul, and thank you for the badge. That was really kind.

I call the mover of Motion 51, please.

RECRUITMENT

MOTION 51

51. RECRUITMENT

This Congress directs the F&GPC to look into a lower rate for low paid workers to enable us to recruit and fight for these workers to get at least the Living Wage.

HULL RETAIL & DISTRIBUTION BRANCH

Midland & East Coast Region

(Referred)

JULIE SHAW (Midland & East Coast): President and Congress, can I just take this opportunity to welcome the guys from North East Yorkshire & Humber. We will be joining you. *(Applause)*

Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a second-time speaker. *(Applause)* I move Motion 51, speaking on recruitment. This Congress directs the Finance & General

Purposes Committee to look into a lower rate for low paid workers to enable us to recruit and fight for these workers to get at least the Living Wage as a minimum.

Utility bills and mortgages are taking their toll and low-paid workers are losing their homes. Congress, these people are finding themselves in debt just to try and make ends meet. Today I work with colleagues who are living hand-to-mouth. They cannot afford the cost of Union fees, yet, Congress, they need the Union the most. We have colleagues who have to go to food banks just to feed their families. It breaks my heart to see hardworking men and women finding themselves in that position in this day and age. Their need is now. We need to recognise this and recruit new members at a low subscription rate. Then I am sure we can fight to get them the living wage.

Why stop there? Once we have achieved the living wage, we can then work towards pay rises. Then they will be earning enough to pay the full subscription rates. Congress, this is a win-win situation. I hope the National Secretary's report goes somewhere to address this matter. We will stand by the National Secretary's report and refer our motion. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Julie. Secunder?

YVONNE DAVIDSON (Midland & East Coast): I am a first-time real-life speaker, first-time real-life delegate. *(Applause)* I second Motion 51: Recruitment.

I and I am sure all of my comrades around this Congress floor are repeatedly asked by our lower-paid fellow work colleagues and potential members why our sister unions have a banding system for lower-paid and part-time workers. I know we have a tiered system below 20 hours. We all know that the majority of these colleagues are also women. How many lower-paid workers go to our sister unions because their membership rates are fairer? We are in a cost-of-living crisis and members have to choose between a meal or a GMB membership. Which do you think they will choose? Well, let's help them and support them when they need us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Yvonne. While the next mover, the mover of Motion 54, comes to the rostrum, let me make the announcement that two bank cards have been found. They are with Sam, the steward, at the back. If you think you have lost your cards, they have been found.

21ST CENTURY STRIKE BENEFIT FOR A 21ST CENTURY UNION
MOTION 54

54. 21ST CENTURY STRIKE BENEFIT FOR A 21ST CENTURY UNION

This Congress recognises the vital importance of strike benefit in maximising the industrial leverage of GMB members in present and future workplace struggles against bad employers and bad employment practices.

This Congress also recognises the role strike benefit can play in attracting and recruiting new members to our great union who are seeking to defend and advance their terms, conditions and interests in the workplace.

This Congress further recognises that the rate of strike benefit has remained static for many years and requests that the Central Executive Council make arrangements for:

- i. Improving the rate of strike benefit;
- ii. Making strike benefit payable from day one to all full financial members whether they work full or part-time hours;
- iii. Undertaking, as part of CEC business, to set the rate of strike benefit on an annual or bi-annual basis considering inflation, industrial action, economic, political and any other factor the CEC deem relevant aiming for the highest affordable rate possible; and,
- iv. Drafting in readiness for Congress 2023 a CEC rule-amending motion – *should this be necessary* – to achieve i, ii and iii.

N90 NASUWT BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region
(Referred)

EREB PANESAR (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 54: 21st Century Strike Benefit for a 21st Century Union. Congress, strike benefit is a key aspect of union organising, union growth and a show of union strength. It is a way to support current members and to recruit new ones. This motion invites the Central Executive Council to improve the rate of the rule book's strike benefit and make it payable from day one of any strike. The current rate of strike pay has remained static for many years and it is only payable after the third day of strike, which can disadvantage many workers, especially part-timers.

Congress, to paraphrase our General Secretary Gary Smith's election statement, and I quote: "We are not a political party, a lobby group or a charity. We are about exerting power in the workplace". Congress, in the last six months alone in my region we have seen successful strike action at Somers Forge, Circo in Sandwell and Sandwell Leisure Trust, to name a few, and not to mention the amazing victory of refuse workers from BIFFA in the Southern Region yesterday. *(Applause)* Fair play and all that.

But, Congress, without a real strike fund fit for purpose, we do not have the ability to support members on the picket line fighting to make work better. Thank you.
(Applause)

HE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ereb. I call the seconder for Motion 54.
(The motion was formally seconded from the floor) Thank you, Birmingham. I call the mover of Motion 56.

UPDATES TO SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING
MOTION 56

56. UPDATES TO SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

This Congress recognises that Congress 2018 called for GMB to produce a formal statement of investment principles which the CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee adopted in March 2019.

We note that there is now pressure on companies to be even more transparent and broaden their Environmental Social Governance issues and add biodiversity and human rights to their targets.

We call on the CEC to review their 2019 Statement of Investment Principles to include these new measures and for the GMB to then make the final statement visible to all and available as an appendix in the GMB Financial Accounts which are agreed by Congress each year.

EALING BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

ZAHIDA ABBAS-NOORI (London): President and Congress, I am moving Motion 56 on Socially Responsible Investing. I am a first-time delegate but speaking for the fifth time, and I promise that this is going to be my last contribution. *(Applause)*

Today more and more investors, including trade unions are demanding investments which combine the desire to invest in a responsible way with the needs to generate decent returns. Congress sought clarification. We submitted this motion to follow up in a similar motion, which was carried at Congress 2018. This asked GMB to produce an investment charter or statement detailing how it invests to meet ESG, which is Environmental, Social and Governance objectives. You will be pleased to hear that, following that congress in 2018, the CEC did in fact produce a statement of investment principles, and circulated a copy of that document at the fringe meeting during Congress.

This year's motion has asked GMB to look at the statement again, update it and make members aware. Congress, I would like to see this statement being made available for members in a secure format. We want GMB to show its members just how it invests but realise that the GMB is not a listed company. We should be mindful as to where we publish this statement. We do appreciate, if we look at the GMB rule book, that there is an opportunity for the members to see the GMB accounts and for any corresponding statements.

Secondly, we know that the ESG (Environmental Social Governance) agenda has now moved to the north and we are seeing companies moving to report on their investments in terms of ethical goals, human rights and biodiversity.

THE PRESIDENT: Zahida, could you conclude, please?

ZAHIDA ABBAS-NOORI: Yes. You have seen the recent company agreement with Arden. We are now questioning the integrity of the business and the customers. We

now care about how the particular environmental companies are. Shareholders are also being moved ----

THE PRESIDENT: Zahida, can you wind-up, please?

ZAHIDA ABBAS-NOORI: Congress, I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, but well done for being a first-timer and speaking five times. You have got the taste of it, obviously. Secunder?

BISMILLAH MOHAMED (London): Those of you who are into football analogies, it's a hat-trick. I second Motion 56. Firstly, social and economic justice is at the heart of everything we do. So we all have a responsibility to our proud history of fighting oppression and exploitation and a responsibility to our current reputation as a union which opposes inequality and employer abuse wherever we find them, to ensure that GMB money does not fund corporations which are guilty of the very practices we condemn.

As the mover has outlined, we are asking the GMB to be clear and transparent in its investment decisions and ensure we keep up with the trends. We understand that sometimes we may need to invest in companies, such as Amazon, whom some members may have concerns about. This is not against our principles as we are protecting members' jobs. We are also using this opportunity as having investment in a company which gives us the power to attend the AGM and question issues such as executive pay and biodiversity from the inside.

To close, the region accepts the CEC's qualification and would be grateful to be kept up-to-date on decisions as to where might be a suitable place to publish this statement and give an update so that our members have true transparency. Please support.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. The General Secretary will now respond to these motions and move the Accounts. As per SOC Report 1, delegates were invited to ask questions on the Annual Accounts, and these should have been submitted to the platform no later than 5.30 on Monday. To confirm, the platform received no questions on the accounts. So the General Secretary will move the accounts without reference to any questions.

As there are no financial proposals on the financial statement and annual accounts, I will put them to the vote once the General Secretary has moved.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I am the General Secretary and Treasurer, speaking on behalf of the CEC on Composite 4, Motions 51, 54 and 56.

Firstly, I want to say a very sincere thank you to all the branches for bringing forward these motions. We are working to try to make our Union more affordable, more valuable to current members and to future members. I assure any workers who might wish to join the GMB that work is already ongoing.

In terms of Composite 4, the CEC is supportive of calling for a review of contribution rates. We are absolutely determined to break down barriers to people joining our union. The CEC asks that this motion be referred so that the CEC can take into account a broad range of options, not just those limited to that listed in the motion.

Motion 51 calls for a review of our subscriptions for low-paid workers. For consistency, we are also asking that this motion be referred, along with Composite 4, to form part of a review led by the CEC on subscriptions and affordability.

I can tell Congress that we have carried out some preliminary work in this area and I am very conscious that I stood on a platform of reducing the cost of being a GMB member, so we want to work through what all the options might look like. We want to do that in an open and transparent way that ultimately does make union membership more affordable, particularly for the lowest paid.

On Motion 54, if the region agrees to refer back, it would give the CEC an opportunity to examine any implications of change to strike pay benefit. Regions have been and remain able to exercise discretion around strike pay benefits and support during disputes. Referring the motion will enable the CEC to consider any changes relevant to the wording and rules to ensure that we are flexible in our approach to the payment of the benefit but also at the same time are mindful of not putting the whole financial stability of the union at risk.

As a comrade said, as General Secretary and Treasurer, when I stood in that election, I made commitments about what our union stood for and the approach our union would take. We want more campaigns and that will mean more disputes. I am very clear that that has implications for strike pay benefits. So we do need to make sure that our rules around strike pay are fit for purpose. As a start, Congress, going into this year's budget, we have made a £500,000 provision for disputes, but I am also clear that that is not enough, because one dispute on one refuse contract can easily cost us in excess of £100,000. So what we are asking for, Congress, is really time and space to look at this issue in more detail.

Finally, on Motion 56 – Updates to Social Responsibility and Investing – we do support this motion. Very helpfully, the finance team have given me some information already about how we manage our finances and some of the guidance we insist upon. We will circulate that to branches.

The qualification we have, though, is that our financial accounts are a statutory document so we don't think it is the right place to include a statement, but we give an absolute assurance that there will be an annual update, it will be made available on our website for members only, we will be clear about where that will be posted, but the exact time, of course, will be dependent upon the discussions we have with the fund managers.

Therefore, Congress, we are asking that Composite 4, Motions 51 and 54 be referred back and that Motion 56 be supported with that wee qualification. Thank you, President. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I move straight now to the financial statements. I am speaking as your General Secretary and Treasurer to the financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2021. As the President said, no questions have been received on the financial statements. I will, therefore, move that they are adopted.

Congress, you have received an updated electronic copy of the 2021 financial statements. I am very sorry about the late amendments to the print version that you originally received in your delegate pack. This ultimately was down to a technical accounting provision which required a re-evaluation of the properties that we hold as an organisation, properties which have been identified as investment properties because we lease out significant parts of them. Now having completed that re-evaluation, the net worth of the union has actually increased with total assets amount to £161.3 million. So it was a good news story for us.

I would like to thank Graham Dow, our head of finance, and Alison Tuttle, our management accountant, for the work that they have done over the finances. I know it has been extremely frustrating over the past couple of weeks, and also for putting on the fringe meeting where we deal with the financial statements and any questions in a bit more detail. Your work, your contributions, both Alison and Graham, are vital in ensuring the finances of this great old union are in the best possible shape.

We have been through a period of huge upheaval and turbulence, and we are going to discuss this some more as we go through the financial debate. I have been very honest, and I will be very honest, about where we have been and where we are around our money in the union. But I believe, and I hope, that we have started to stabilise the finances and the accounts for last year, which are a testimony to that.

Let me give you some feel for how tough it has been with budgets across the union. I did stand on a commitment to make it more affordable to be a union member and the starting point for that was asking the CEC and Congress to agree to freeze subs last year. That was the right thing to do for our members but it does put a huge financial strain on the organisation. What we know happened with the Tories is that they cut funding and support for Union Learn. We had a number of people working on Union Learn projects. Unlike other unions, we didn't simply let those project workers go. We found in a very tight budget £500,000 to keep our Union Learn staff in employment as long as possible. In the best traditions of the GMB, every region and every nation chipped in, even those nations and regions which were not part of Union Learn. They contributed to the £500,000 to protect people who had been working with this organisation.

Of course, in terms of budgets, we are not immune from what has happened with the cost-of-living crisis. If you look at what happened with our energy bills on their own, we saw really significant increases for running our offices and infrastructure.

As of December 31 last year, we were employing 543 staff. Our single biggest cost as a union is the wages of our employees, the pay, the conditions and the pensions. Not all our staff are paid as well as me. I am very grateful for what I am paid as a General Secretary. But in a tight budget year where we have frozen subs, I was delighted that we could afford a pay rise for our hardworking, loyal and dedicated staff.

As an organisation that strives to be an even better employer, to try and be more flexible and to encourage more women to get working and involved in the organisation, we made really significant improvements for support for those with children of pre-school age. I made the point at the time, there would be less free bars and more support for those with children of pre-school age. We also made significant improvements around parental leave for those with new children. We should celebrate that fact as an organisation.

In all honesty, I wanted last year to have gone further. I wanted to do more to help those who have children at school but I could not. I just couldn't get there because the finances are in a pretty precarious position.

Last year we also had to meet huge costs on the rising number of disputes. We should not be afraid of that. We should celebrate it. That's what our core business is. But one dispute on its own cost us in excess of £3 million.

In terms of our pension – this is really important – we are in the middle of a valuation process and I am confident that our pension scheme is in a pretty decent position. All of us as employees are very grateful for the support that you, as lay members, give to our pensions. So our pension scheme is in good nick, but the other big challenge we were facing was around Union Line. In the past 12 months since May '21 we have put £2, 657,000 into Union Line. We are going to make changes there. We are talking about that as an executive.

In short, Congress, we have managed to stabilise our finances around a time of real adversity. The contribution of the finance team has been vital in that and of the whole senior management team, who have made really tough decisions about cutting spending, reducing the headcount and focusing on our budgets. Despite all those challenges around budgets, we should also celebrate the fact that we have been investing in our union as well, because we cannot cut our way out of the challenges we have as an organisation. You heard yesterday about the employment of our new National Race Officer, and you see the fantastic investment and work around the Women's Campaign Unit. But it does cost money. Tight as things are and as difficult as they are, I know that the SMT and CEC remain committed to investing in things like our Women's Campaign Unit and the work around the National Race Officer.

Congress, we are going to debate the Special Report on Branch Finances, which is right and proper. I will deal with that shortly. Just let me be very clear about what our accounts actually tell us and what they say, because on the face of it we show a surplus of more than £1.6 million for last year. But some of that money relates to our pension. We have to register that money in a certain way because of accountancy rules. Those figures don't necessarily take into account our full pension costs, because when they do the real surplus for last year for our union was under £300,000. On an income of £70 million, we had a surplus of less than £300,000. With a refuse dispute that can cost £100,000 to prosecute, Congress, we were and are running on fumes and everybody has to be really sober about that.

On a positive note, because of the hard decisions that you took many years ago as a lay democracy, we have a really strong asset base in the Union of in excess of £161

million. I do want to commend the work of our general trustees because growing the investments does help secure the future of the organisation.

It has been a tough year but we got over the line. Very importantly, we know what has to be done going forward. We are going to have to have this difficult debate over branches. We are going to have to keep a grip on costs and we are going to have to keep membership as affordable as possible. Above all, we have to get focused on growing our membership. When I say “grow our membership”, I don’t just mean recruiting people into the Union, but organising workers and campaigning with workers in order that we make work better. I move the Report, President. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. I will now move to the votes on the motions and the Annual Accounts. Does Yorkshire agree to refer Composite 4? *(Agreed)* Thank you for agreeing. Does North West & Irish agree to refer Composite 4? *(Agreed)* Thank you for agreeing. I know I heard that Midland has already agreed to refer Motion 51 in your speech. Does Birmingham agree to refer Motion 54? *(Agreed)* Thank you for agreeing. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 56? *(Agreed)* I will move to the vote on Motion 56. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. I will move to the vote on the Annual Accounts. All those in favour, please show? All those against? The Annual Accounts are carried.

Composite 4 was REFERRED.

Motion 51 was REFERRED.

Motion 54 was REFERRED.

Motion 56 was CARRIED.

The Annual Accounts were CARRIED.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: BRANCH COMMISSIONS

Congress 2022

CEC Special Report on Branch Commissions

Background

The financial membership of the GMB as at 30 September 2021 stood at 574,856. This represented a net reduction during the previous two years of 41,810 members. Of the 574,856 members as at 30 September 2021 only 470,230 were grade 1 or 2 members.

Over 100,000 members were therefore paying a promotional or reduced rate or were retired life members who no longer pay any contributions under rule.

At the time of writing, on 31 March 2022, membership stands at 568,631 (462,919 of which pay grade 1 or 2 contributions).

These are exceptional and difficult times in which we need to balance the financial pressures on our members as well as the Union as a whole which includes every part of the organisation, Nationally, Regionally and at Branch level. It is necessary to ensure that GMB funds are available for the promotion of the interests and needs of our members at all levels of our union.

This is an issue that affects the whole of the organisation. All budget holders throughout the Union have been required to examine all areas of expenditure under their remit and to identify all those savings that can be made; including the way we operate in the future, having learned the lessons from the ways of working established as a result of the pandemic. These lessons, learned from recent hard experience, require us to be honest and, at times, brutally honest with ourselves and our members about the performance of our Union. After five years when membership figures were no longer being widely circulated: we have begun again to focus in upon the figures, the membership losses incurred when our eyes were not upon the goal, and the potential for future growth. We are starting from where we are, now, and not where we would wish ourselves to be.

In addition, far more rigorous financial controls have been introduced and the cost of administering the union has been reduced. All financial decisions, including staff appointments are scrutinised in order to ensure that our activities are seen as being vital to the operation of the Union. The Union's structure is being made smaller and leaner, and better suited to industrial organising and campaigning. This is all part of returning the GMB to its original, core, values and growing and strengthening the Union at every turn, and to establishing the highest fiduciary duties.

It is the responsibility of us all to act as good stewards of the members' money entrusted to us through the payment of their contributions. This means ensuring that, at all levels of the GMB, the resources entrusted to us are held in the most advantageous place, provide us with maximum flexibility, and that these resources can be quickly applied as necessary to points of the greatest need and advantage.

The current system of Branch finances has resulted in £10 million of members' money having been accumulated – and often locked away - in branch bank accounts where flexibility is, by its nature, minimal as these funds are held by relatively few branches. This £10 million represents commissions that have been paid to branches under the current system and which have not been utilised to support our members, organise and grow the union, in the way intended under Rule. The current system has, also, resulted in commissions not being distributed equitably, or evenly, among the branches to support all of our members.

Full authority resides with the Regions to exercise discretion where branch activities require support. Regions have the flexibility to protect branches in order to ensure that all our branches have access to the resources their activities require. In addition, branches have the opportunity through their branch plans to request additional funding to resource their activities. All branch plans and proposals for special payments (such as honorariums) must be agreed by their Regional Committee, as responsibilities come with rights.

Rules

In accordance with rule 10.1 “The union is run by the Central Executive Council.”

Under rule 10.6 the CEC “may use any powers and carry out all acts, duties and responsibilities it feels are necessary to achieve our aims, whether or not these, duties and responsibilities are specifically mentioned in these rules.”

Rule 34.1 as currently worded states “The region will set aside for each branch a payment equal to 10% of the contributions of the members of that branch”

The key to this rule is that the region will “set aside” a payment. As the words used are “set aside” there is no automatic right or entitlement under rule for any branch to receive a payment in full or otherwise, although existing custom and practice has been to pay out all the commission.

Rule 34.4 states “The funds can be used to make special payments (honorariums) to branch officials, in line with financial rules set by the Central Executive Council.”

Likewise, there is no entitlement for any branch official to be paid an honorarium, but instead this is at the discretion of the branch, as agreed by their Regional Committee.

Central Executive Council Decision

Against this backdrop the CEC at its meeting on 26 October 2021, had a choice between continuing to set aside and pay the 10% commission to branches and increasing membership contributions; or reducing branch commission and freezing membership contributions.

The CEC made its decision under its rule 10.6 powers to reduce the percentage set aside by regions for each branch to 7.5%, based on the financial situation that the Union as a whole finds itself in, the inflationary rises affecting our members’ pay packets and living standards, and in order to ensure there was no contribution increase for the second year running. This decision was implemented on 1 January 2022. The CEC made this decision subject to its ratification at Congress.

In making any decisions about the future direction of the Union, the CEC recognised that there are a number of varied factors which have resulted in a drop in membership. There is no intention to downplay the excellent efforts of anyone in the Union including all of our staff, branches and postholders during exceptional and difficult times.

Support for branches has not been withdrawn but rather the CEC believe the changes allow resources to be held in a manner that affords more flexibility allowing the Union to be able to quickly and more efficiently allocate resources to areas where needs arise through branch activity aiming at recruitment, campaigning, organising, and sustaining growth.

Not all branches are of a similar size with the same resources or requirements. The CEC, in coming to this decision, has recognised this and that full authority resides with the regions to exercise discretion where branch activities require additional help and support. This allows the flexibility needed to ensure that all branches have access to the resources that their activities require as agreed within their branch plan, and by their Regional Committee.

The CEC has not made this decision lightly and have taken full consideration of the needs of our organisation as a whole, bearing in mind the imperative need to deploy members’ money to be best ends and the decision to maintain the current rate of membership contributions despite inflationary pressures. Alongside this decision to safeguard the finances of the union, new membership rate proposals are under development to adapt to the changing world of work and make the cost of membership more affordable to low-waged workers.

Proposed Rule Amendment

The CEC therefore asks Congress to ratify their decision to reduce the amount set aside to 7.5% of contributions, and further asks Congress to adopt the following amendment to rule 34.1

to give flexibility to the Regions to provide additional assistance, when needed, to active branches.

Rule 34: Delete clause 1, and replace with:

1 Each region will set aside for each branch an amount equal to 7.5% of the contributions of the members of that branch. Full authority resides with the regions to exercise discretion where activities require support ensuring that all branches have access to the resources that their activities require as agreed within their branch plan. Additional support may be granted on application to the region for specific project-based work that delivers measurable benefits to GMB and its members.

THE PRESIDENT: We will now debate the CEC Special Report on Branch Commissions. As there are still some motions left on the agenda relating to this matter, I shall go through how this debate will run. First, we shall debate the CEC Special Report. I will invite the General Secretary to move the Special Report and will then invite our CEC member to second. I will then invite a delegate from each region to speak on the report and we will do it in alphabetical order. Once we have finished the debate, I will then ask for the remaining motions to be moved. I will then invite the General Secretary to respond to those motions.

Once those motions have been debated, I will then take the vote on the Branch Commission Special Report, and if the Branch Commission Special Report is carried, any motions which stand in opposition will fall and will not be voted on. I will advise Congress which motions stand in opposition to the report. I ask Gary Smith to move the CEC Special Report: Branch Commissions. Thank you, Gary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Gary Smith, General Secretary and Treasurer moving the Special Report on Branch Commissions. This has really been a moving feast in terms of us getting to this debate. At times it has been quite heated. I am going to address some of that in my contribution.

Congress, our members are suffering. We have heard a lot about that this week and it is absolutely right. They expect us, as they should, to look after every last penny. Doing that requires grown-up conversations where nothing is hidden and nothing is off limits, so let me speak to this directly.

Under the previous regime, this Union did lose its way. We were not honest about the problems we faced, we were not honest about falling union financial membership and there was far too much focus and spending on things like politics. There was little control over credit card expenditure and a culture based on licence, entitlement and waste was allowed to set in. There was a lack of transparency and a lack of honesty about things like the challenges we face in our legal services, and when questions were raised people were shot down. *(Applause)*

In the past 12 months I think we have started to get a grip on things, our finances have stabilised but the truth is, in coming into this debate, we are million pounds adrift already in this year's budget. These financial realities have to be tackled head on. Budgets have been tightened, there's greater accountability than before around finances, we are going to lose the cost of two regional secretaries and a number of

posts in National Office have not been filled. Graham's promotion was an internal one so we have lost the senior body in finance and, at the same time, as I said earlier, we have been investing in the future of the Union with the Women's Campaign Unit, our National Race Officer, with technology, communications and, very importantly, we are picking our fights again and we are winning again. *(Applause)*

My aspiration, Congress, and the aspiration of the CEC is that for the second year running we freeze subs. That is what I was democratically elected to do, to make this Union more affordable and ensure that no worker is priced out of GMB membership. *(Applause)*

This is not a threat. This is just a reality. If we cannot pass this branch paper, then tonight the CEC will meet and tomorrow you will vote on increasing the subs for our members. You will vote to increase the subs of our members in the teeth of my opposition. The CEC was faced with a tough choice: make cuts to commissions for about 700 branches or hike subs for half-a-million members. We are going to hear a debate about democracy, but I stand before you with a mandate. Let's be honest about how many of our branches are functioning under rule. When we want to talk about democracy, we cannot have it always, bearing in mind Monaghan. Monaghan made very clear that the democracy in the union afforded to the CEC and other bodies should be claimed and exercised. The CEC, in my view, is very clear. It has the right to make tough decisions around the finances of the Union.

My comrade from North West & Irish will get up – we have been long-time friends – and we will debate this issue under Motion 41. We are asking for reference back on that comrades. But we just have to say that we do have a disagreement about the rule book, accountability and democracy and where that has to lie.

To my comrades in Northern Region, I just want to address this directly with you. I understand your position has changed, but we have had this debate. Not only have we had this debate elsewhere, but we lost control of our finances and that is why we spent £2.8 million on a regional office where membership in the region was plummeting. *(Applause)* Five branches in the region hold a quarter of the branch funds! Branch secretaries on regional committee. It became pretty much the norm or standard practice that they were taking 16% commission. One branch secretary – one with seven branches – had taken 16% commission from four of those branches. People want to lecture me about democracy and accountability. Well, let's have the debate here on the Congress floor. *(Applause)* I know in Northern Region – I celebrate the fantastic work that so many of our activists and branches do – and this is not an affliction that affected everybody, for those branches that were taking 16% from those branch secretaries, then as your Treasurer I will be asking to meet your branches. *(Applause)*

I want to ensure that every member knows exactly what was happening with their money. The financial mismanagement is over. Financial reward for individuals over and above the interests of members who are struggling on the minimum wage is over. Abuse of members' money is over. Financial fiefdoms are over. Personal gain and patronage is over. We are going to make and we do make provision within the paper to protect those good branches that are doing the good work of the union, particularly those smaller branches because we care passionately about them. *(Applause)* I know

there is some great work going on across the regions to support branches and to have that honest debate. Candidly what the paper does is what I committed to do, which was to put greater power in the hands of the regional democracy because that is where the power has to lie in this union.

Congress, let's put an end to the damaging past. Stand up for the members, defend their money and support our active branches. Put the interests of the many before the few. As I said yesterday, if we want change, we can't look to others. We must do it ourselves. It is up to us. Let's seize the moment and support the report. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call Penny Robinson from the CEC to second.

PENNY ROBINSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am seconding the CEC's Special Report on Branch Commissions. Congress, this is an extremely serious debate. The decline in our membership has taken a toll on our finances and in too many cases branch funds are not being used to organise and build our branches and our union. *(Applause)*

The CEC acted in accordance with the rule book and the rule amendment in front of you will put the Union on a secure financial footing. It provides the flexibility so that branches that are growing and campaigning can get the resources they need. Congress, that flexibility is there. We have a duty to safeguard the financial security of our Union, but the CEC's action was always subject to the decision of this Congress.

These are the facts. Reversing the change will leave a £1.5 million hole in our finances. The truth is that we are currently more than one million behind budget. That is £2.5 million we will have to find, and that is not just one year. That's every year. It might be said that there are other options but, Congress, we do not have the luxury of easy choices. The cost of administering the Union has already been brought down and the only realistic way of making up that shortfall is by raising contributions. A year ago Congress endorsed the decision not to raise the price of membership, and the CEC would not recommend an increase in contributions to the Congress. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, I ask you, do not send us back to our members to explain an increase in the price of our membership. We cannot increase the levy for the sake of preserving a status quo that was not working.

Congress, we are all the trustees of this union. We must keep it on a sound footing. If we want to protect our members and the beating heart of our democracy, our Congress, we need to take tough financial decisions. The Report sets out a realistic financial proposal. In all sincerity the opposing motions do not. Congress, this is your decision. I ask you, please, support this Report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Penny. I will now invite a delegate from each region to speak on the report. Can I start with Birmingham & West Midlands.

JAMES BARWISE (Birmingham & West Midlands): Good afternoon, President and Congress. I am speaking to support the CEC's Special Report on Branch Funding. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

We have all heard people speaking this week about the cost-of-living crisis, the right to eat or heat. We have to make the GMB affordable for everybody. Our branch, the R35 branch, is one of the top recruiters in the country. We know how important it is to recruit the workers. Recruiting one member gives you strength. Recruiting more members gives you power. We cannot afford to lose any members. We need to make the GMB a lean, mean fighting machine for the future. *(Applause)*

We have heard that we need to make this GMB more affordable for our lower-paid workers. We froze subscriptions last year and we are doing so this year. Support this Special Report.

Let me say one thing before I finish. No, it's not about you, Gary. He tried to buy me a drink last night with a Matalan card. I don't know what that was about! Anyway, a special thank you to Gordon Richardson who retired from JCB and he still goes in every other day with me and Tommy Dawkins recruiting members on a weekly basis. Thank you, Gordon. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jim. I call a speaker from London Region.

UNMESH DESAI (London): London Region supports this report. Congress, let me be absolutely clear. If you do not support this report, if you vote against it, the consequences will be far reaching and will damage our Union now and for years to come. *(Applause)* We know that GMB has its lowest financial membership, and this has caused us to look inwards and make some very tough decisions to pull us out of the decline. Do you really want to see the GMB subjected to a possible merger or takeover by another union? *(Calls of "No")* A vote against the report will mean an increase in contributions, which will affect our members' pockets and more will consider leaving the union. As a result, the union's income will reduce and budgets will have to be immediately adjusted. This could mean closing GMB offices, cancelling conferences, stopping much-needed campaigns and staff and officer reductions, to name but a few. Congress, this is most probably the most important decision you will be taking this week. I urge you to work for the report and to move our union forward at a time when members need us the most. To those who say that this is a breach of our democratic principles and procedures, it is not! Congress, it's a simple choice. Support the report to continue to freeze contributions which will benefit up to half-a-million members who are faced with increased energy and household bills and below inflation wage increases or raise contributions and place our union into spiralling decline. I urge you to support the report. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Unmesh. I call Midlands & East Coast.

IAN BECKETT (Midland & East Coast): President, I am from Midlands & East Coast and speaking in support of the CEC's Special Report on Branch Commissions. *(Applause)* We are going through a cost-of-living crisis and GMB members are bearing the brunt of this. We need an affordable union now more than ever. The CEC's meeting on 26th October had a choice: keep 10% commissions to branches or freeze membership contributions. They knew what the right choice was. It was right then and it is right now. We have many workers who work part-time or are on the

minimum wage. A subs freeze was right last year and it is needed so much again this year in the cost-of-living crisis. We also need to look at our contribution rates. GMB must be an affordable union to all.

The reduction to a 7.5% commission allows the union to deliver this. The amendment gives the region the discretion to ensure that branches have the support to continue campaigning and organising. The Special Report addresses the concerns I have raised and it is with these points in mind that we ask you to support the CEC's Special Report on Branch Commissions. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Northern.

PETER KANE (Northern): Congress, I recognise that this will have an effect on branches. It will have a big effect on those branches that are active and working in it. But I didn't become a shop steward for the money. *(Applause)* The two branches I have belonged to have never paid shop stewards' commission. We do it because we want to. However, there is discretion from the regional secretaries for those branches that want to be active, because branch secretaries are branch secretaries. They can't put a plan in and see what is going to happen in six months' time. They're secretaries, not fortune tellers.

As for the rules – there is 10.1, 10.6, 34.1 and 34.4 – it doesn't need rules. It's common sense. It's a no brainer. There are three alternatives. We accept the report, we raise contributions or we make redundancies, none of which I would vote for in normal circumstances. In fact, I don't like any of them, but they are here. The Northern Region has somewhere about 40,000 members with 20 officers. We rely on the shop stewards. But 20 officers ain't going to support 40,000 members! It is the lesser of three evils. We need to look at it, open our eyes, smell the coffee and see what's happening. I support.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Peter. North West & Irish Region.

PAUL RICHARDS (North West & Irish): President and Congress, I am speaking in support of the CEC's Special Report on Branch Commissions. Congress, I am standing at this rostrum to support this report on behalf of the North West & Irish Region, and our delegation supports the report after a democratic show of hands on Saturday.

We all want a financially sound union that can go on and prosper. Just like many others, this report has caused some divisions in the region. However, we have all agreed that we want a union with a future, a union with strength and a union we can all be proud of, based on open and transparent policies. Failing to support the revised branch rate would result in other areas being impacted. This could include an increase in subscriptions adding a further burden to our members, who are already feeling the pinch and failings of this vile Tory Government. It is in this spirit that we ask colleagues to support this report and ensure the future of our union and the needs of our members to live on for many years to come. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. GMB Scotland.

ANNETTE DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): I am speaking in favour of the CEC Special Report on Branch Commissions. Two years of a pandemic has taken its toll on our union, on our membership and our strength. Without the dedication of staff, branches and post-holders, this would be far worse. During those two years we have all had to be flexible and adapt as the world around us changes. Our union now has to adapt. We must make a renewed effort to get stronger, challenging employers and continuing to win for workers in more and more workplaces.

The proposals will mean flexibility for regions to be able to respond to regional priorities and issues and hold authority on how the funds are spent. Spending will be focused, apportioned fairly and accountable through branch plans and projected specific funding. Most importantly, it will ensure that our union will continue to campaign and run.

With more than 470,000 grade 1 and grade 2 members, each and everyone of them is going to work and pay in their membership fees so this union can empower. It can empower them to win more funding for the public services, higher pay offers and respect in their workplace in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis. They expect their fees to be spent in a way that is not only responsible but achieves the greatest impact. That includes fighting for £15 an hour for social care, bigger pay rises for Asda staff and ensuring that Scotland's offshore wind turbines are manufactured at yards at home.

There is no point having millions tied up for a rainy day when the rainy day is now. Workers need their union now. Members expect our union to grow industrial power to obtain the best possible outcomes. When the pressures on incomes have never been so high, how do we raise funds as well as spend them is also important. We can't contradict our words with our actions. This Tory Government, the energy companies and employers are expecting our members to pay when they can't. We can't justify those fees lying idle in bank accounts when every penny is needed to take on the Tories and the bosses. We are rebuilding, growing and getting stronger. Without a serious attempt on fees, workers will be pushed out of our union and the Movement, especially the lowest-paid who stand to gain the most from their union membership. President and Congress, our union cannot stand still while the rest of the world changes around us. The fight is now. I support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call the Southern Region.

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): President and Congress, I am speaking in support of the Special Report on behalf of the Southern Region.

Comrades, a year ago our members directly voted for Gary Smith with a mandate of reducing the cost of membership. You have the right today under the rule book to vote down this Special Report, but I don't believe that we have the moral right to do that because our members voted to reduce the cost of membership. This Congress should not put an obstacle in that directly-expressed wish from our members. We cannot permit a road block in their aspirations.

Comrades, we are at a fork in the road. We've seen the cost-of-living crisis, the inflation which is forcing our members to fight. We are seeing a rise of militancy.

We have the opportunity, if we make the right decisions and if we do the right things, as I believe we are doing, beginning to do and growing stronger and stronger, to make a decisive shift in power in this country in favour of working people. That will create the GMB, which is already a powerful union, to be the most powerful voice in the British working class. That is one path. *(Applause)*

The other path, if we make the wrong decision, if we put up the subs and betray the trust of our members who voted for Gary to keep the cost of membership affordable, would be a crisis of legitimacy of our democracy, but people will leave the union. We will have less money, we will be able to employ fewer organisers, we will be able to fund fewer strikes and we won't deliver for people. It is quite clear what we have to do. We have to be relevant, we have to deliver and we have to offer value for money.

There was concern, including from myself as a branch secretary, that we just did not see how we could do it with 7.5%, and this is addressed in the Special Report. "Regions have the discretion to talk to branch secretaries, and where the money is being spent wisely in support of members servicing, organising and delivering for members". Then there is discretion because some of us do have challenges. I was talking to the branch secretary of our Security branch and because of the way their industry is organised in Southern Region, it is not unusual for them to have to pay £100 in travel costs to represent someone. In my branch we have had three industrial action ballots this year. I've spent £5,000 on strikes so far, and this morning we notified Wiltshire Council of a further seven days of industrial action where we take out the traffic wardens. Sometimes we have to have the conversation with the regional secretary when we need the money. That is in the report. We have that power. But let's not mythologise the democracy of the branches. We have a load of absolutely brilliant branches but also we know that there are branches in name only. There are branches which don't meet, that don't communicate with their members, that do nothing, sit on pots of money and sometimes do worse than sit on pots of money that they allow branch secretaries to pursue their own projects.

Comrades, trust our regions, trust the fact that branch secretaries can get good results by talking to their regional secretaries and their regional committees. Now is not the time for division. Support the Special Report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Wales & South West.

ANDY MILLS (Wales & South West): President, General Secretary and Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am speaking in support of the CEC's Special Report on Branch Commissions.

We all recognise that our union has been through exceptionally difficult times. We really need to look at the recommendations within the report to move our union forward. There is financial pressure, as the 2022 Congress delegation, and we have a responsibility to act and make the necessary changes to enable the union to strive and survive.

The point, colleagues – this is reality – is that the changes that the report mentions can make or break this union. I do not want to be part of a division that fells this union. The report has stated that this is an issue that affects the whole of the organisation.

The General Secretary has implemented a more rigorous control over the union's financial decisions, including the staff appointments where we are smaller, leaner but more efficient and effective in what we do.

Opportunities have been put in place for career development of all staff and activists, which we welcome. We should embrace and adopt these opportunities wherever possible. The current system leaves more than £10 million of members' money sitting dormant in our branch accounts, locked away, not invested and is not doing our best with our members' money. We cannot continue running the union in this way and we must all adopt the recommendations that the CEC has stated within this report. We do recognise that there are some branches which are completely self-sufficient in how they are run. Their branches represent their members and their needs and support. The CEC has recognised this by allowing regional autonomy to exercise their discretion which allows the flexibility needed to ensure that all branches have the resources that the branch's organising and servicing activities requires.

Colleagues, I take a quote from the report, which I am sure you have all read and absorbed. "It is the responsibility of all of us to act as good stewards of the members' money entrusted to us for the payment of the contributions". We have given the CEC the powers, as the executive body, to make the best decisions for the union. The CEC has made this decision. Let's not undermine their position that we voted them into. Support the report, let's do what we can to make this union the best campaigning, organising and services union in the world. I support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Andy. I call Yorkshire & North Derbyshire.

SARAH YOUNG (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I am speaking in support of the Special Report on Branch Commissions. Our region had heated debates on the pros and cons of this Special Report. The reality is that if we don't do something now the consequences could be catastrophic for the GMB and its members. Yesterday we debated the issue in a meeting where we were given further information from our CEC members to clarify the situation. Communication seems to be an issue in general. We put it to a democratic collective vote and the result was to support this Special Report.

As a branch secretary myself and a tight-fisted one at that, I am aware that this is not my money but members' money and, as such, I treat it with the respect it deserves. I also would not expect anyone to be out of pocket for carrying out branch activities but emphasis must be on the members who give us their hard-earned money. The crucial point is that no branch will see their activities restricted as a result of those changes, as regions are there to support any branch that does not have funds to organise and campaign. If we don't reduce branch commission, what's the alternative? We can increase subs and see our membership continue to fall, we can cut out vital staff and officers who continue to support us, but that is not an option.

It was good to read about new membership rates being looked at to make the membership more affordable for low-paid workers. Our two-tier systems seems simple but it is not. No disrespect to any member who earns good money, but it cannot be right that those members on zero-hour contracts or low incomes pay the same rates as higher-paid workers. This is a barrier to recruitment. *(Applause)*

Those on the national minimum wage cannot afford membership subs so either won't join or be forced out as their money is needed to eat or heat. At present, there is £10 million in branch funds that have not yet been spent across our union. Recently, I had a member ring me in tears who had been off work for 12 months and her wages were due to be stopped. As such, she would no longer be able to afford the subs. The member was a founding member of our branch back in 2004. The member was having chemo and awaiting a hip replacement operation before Covid struck. She is in her early 60s. The branch has stepped up and she will continue to be a fully paid-up GMB member as our branch will support her through this illness. *(Applause)* Wouldn't it be brilliant if when she is back on her feet that I could tell her, as a low-paid workers, her rate has been reduced? It is good that fees are being looked at but we could do it now. We could trial it until next Congress and if it works I'll bring the motion for a rule change myself. Colleagues, support this Special Report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. Congress, we will now debate the motions relating to the Special Report, so could movers and seconders of Motions 26, 27, 33 and 41 please come to the front. Once the debate is over, I will ask the General Secretary to respond on behalf of the CEC with their position. I call the mover of Motion 26.

UNION ORGANISATION: FINANCES & CONTRIBUTIONS

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now debate the motions relating to the Special Report, so could movers and seconders of Motions 26, 27, 33, and 41 please come down to the front. Once the debate is over, I will ask the General Secretary to respond on behalf of the CEC with their position. So, could the mover of Motion 26, please, come to the rostrum?

BRANCH COMMISSION MOTION 26

26. BRANCH COMMISSION

This Congress agrees that our CEC, in proposing the reduction of Branch commission from 10% to 7.5% to potentially fund another membership contribution freeze for over 500,000 members is commendable.

Members have struggled financially, and many are in low paid jobs on low income. The pandemic has increased the casualisation of jobs in many sectors, often leading to precarious employment on low wages.

Our role as a Trade Union is to respond to these challenges and help organise affected workers in these uncertain economies. The CEC have recognised this challenge by once again proposing a freeze in contributions for all members however, due to declining membership across the UK, available finance to support such a proposal has had to be sought from Branches and Regions wherever possible.

Congress agrees to such a proposal which would see our members contributions frozen at 2020 rates through to October 2023 at the earliest.

BARKING BRANCH London Region

(Carried)

STEVE DAVIES (London): Congress, make no mistake my branch breathed a sigh of relief when we heard that for another year our members' subs were not going up. It had become increasingly tough to convince our members, above all our lower paid members, that we need more money from them. Like you our members have been struggling, living from one pay slip to another. Many have suffered doing lockdown mentally, physically, and financially. But our branches and reps, your branches and reps, continue to support and represent them because the GMB is a union of the people. Rising gas, electricity, food costs, petrol tax, National Insurance, coupled with a below inflation wage increase, and pension cuts, is causing severe distress to our members in this cost-of-living crisis. It is only right that the GMB union responds as best it can by not adding to their financial pressure. Gary, our General Secretary, mentioned this exact point in his speech yesterday. Without any increase in income the GMB just like everyone must tighten its belt and manage monies more efficiently. We have had to carefully balance the need for enough frontline services to support our members whilst cutting overheads which are not easy decisions to make. As I mentioned in the speech I delivered on Sunday, the GMB is at its best when we tackle things head-on, especially if the consequence of these decisions results in a positive effect for our members. As Gary has just advised this Congress, without the reduction in branch commission this will simply mean we will not be able to maintain the current rate of membership contributions.

Our region has made cuts across our structure making our systems and processes leaner, looking at staff, officers, and services. It is inevitable that this would extend to branches as we face a reduction of income due to falling membership. The London Region has been mindful of this and the branches have been asked to look at their branch funds to keep expenditure within budget and to work smarter with these funds. We have to as this would be a reckless management of our members' monies if we do not. Our region has been proactively working with branches on their branch organising plans identifying new targets and attracting new activists, and programmes to best grow the union and support our members during this cost-of-living crisis.

I will be honest with you, this motion has been and is difficult for some to accept. We know important choices like this are not taken lightly and so we commend the CEC on their decision to reduce the quarterly branch commission and we support the Special Report. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: A seconder to Motion 26?

TONY CHOLERTON (London): For as long as I have been attending Congress there have been calls from many branches to freeze the contributions that our grade one and two members make. Many of those branches serve some of the lowest paid people who carry out vital services, such as care workers. In the past the argument has been made that if we are to do this then we will not be able to offer the services that are vital to our members, such as legal representation. We are now in unprecedented circumstances with a cost-of-living crisis that is damaging our members. It is time for GMB to take a different approach to member contributions and to listen to those that are struggling. Membership has fallen by over 40,000 in the last two years and over 100,000 members pay reduced rates or nothing at all. In order to keep contributions

down and to invest in recruitment we need to find the resources from within the organisation. By reducing the branch commission from 10% to 7.5% we can start to make a difference. This is our members' money and needs to be reinvested back into them. The current system of branch finances has resulted in £10m of members' money having been accumulated in branch bank accounts but is not active. This is not an effective way to represent our members: investment in recruitment is. Congress, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. The mover of Motion 27?

BRANCH INCOME

MOTION 27

27. BRANCH INCOME

This Congress agrees if the proposed branch income is reduced from 10% to 7.5% at Congress 2022, it must apply to all regions and branches of the union with no exceptions.

B43 BIRMINGHAM CITY GENERAL BRANCH

Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(*Carried*)

JOY HOLLNESS (Birmingham & West Midlands): President, Congress, Birmingham Region welcomes the work the CEC has undertaken as mentioned in the earlier report to look at branch commissions and as a union how we ensure our members' subscriptions are allocated appropriately. The region is asking that equality and equity is applied with this change. We fully acknowledge that regions need autonomy to support branches that are undertaking activities to support our members and grow our great union so we can continue to support members for many more years. We also note that in the past this has not happened. It needs all regions to apply the new policy fairly and consistently. Congress, please support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joy. Thank you. A seconder? Formally. Thank you, Birmingham. The mover of Motion 33?

INCREASED BRANCH COMMISSION CONTRIBUTIONS

MOTION 33

33. INCREASED BRANCH COMMISSION CONTRIBUTIONS

This Congress moves that the increase in the branch commission contributions, imposed by the General Secretary's office in 2021, is unconstitutional as it has been applied unilaterally and without consultation or rule change. Refunds of overpayments, subsequently made by branches, should be returned to the branch accounts immediately and until such time as there is an agreed consensus among branches as to the correct level of contributions.

W27 TOLPUDDLE BRANCH

Southern Region

(*Lost*)

CHRIS HIBBERD (Southern): This Motion predates the CEC motion on this subject and consequently is not supported by the region. I am aware the CEC has asked that this motion be referred. A motion referred to the CEC is for consideration on the merits of the motion but the merits of this motion are clear and transparent. Reference will bury the motion and deny democracy. This motion is about process.

I note the CEC Statement presented to Congress on Branch Commission but this is too little too late. Congress is the supreme decision-making body of the GMB and not a rubber-stamping machine. This motion is intended to underpin the democracy of the GMB and the authority of Congress. Within months of Congress 2021 the General Secretary announced a rule change that would see branch commissions reduced by 25% to 7.5%, from 10% of branch income. Given the CEC is empowered to run the affairs of the union between Congresses, this is a bridge too far.

The proposal should have been subject to full consultation with branches, regions, and debated at Congress with democratic resolution. This did not happen and branch income was arbitrarily reduced from 10% to 7.5%. This is undemocratic, unconstitutional, and demeans our rule book. This is a serious matter that only Congress should decide upon so there should be no fudging of this constitutional matter, no referral of the motion, and no interference with the rule book.

I am calling on Congress to support this motion, refer the proposal to reduce branch income to full debate and scrutiny at Congress 2023. In the meantime, all branches should be credited with the 2.5% already taken from them by an undemocratic and rule book defying action.

Congress, if this union is to stand for anything we must uphold the authority of Congress and our rule book. Congress should at least be given the opportunity to review rule 10.6 in view of the circumstances. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: No, sorry, that is not acceptable. We listen to other people's views and we debate in a respectful manner. (*Applause*) Just to correct what Chris said there, the CEC is asking you to withdraw your motion in favour of the Special Report and if the Special Report is passed, your motion would fall. Okay. So, is there a seconder for Motion 33?

JOHN INOKOBA (Southern): First-time speaker, first-time delegate. (*Applause*) I am speaking without the support of the region. GMB has been a champion for change and a force for good and a beacon of hope. A win for a member is a win for our community and us all. Congress, we need to look inward and address the burning issues. As the cost-of-living bites through the length and breadth of our society, we need to have discussion about funding. GMB has been holding and making sure employers play by the rules and the rules of fairness, equality, fair pay, and so on, but we fall short of consultation in the areas of funding, commission and contribution. We cannot be telling employers to consult with our members in regards to change and we ourselves not doing the same in terms of funding. Money is a very difficult issue. It can make a relationship; it can make or break a relationship, marriage, friendship, and family. We, the GMB, have one good thing, *Make Work Better* for working people. The idea of common interest is a major force as one big family. Congress, let

us make consultation at the heart of our decision-making. I second. Thank you.
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. A mover of Motion 41?

CONGRESS DEMOCRACY

MOTION 41

41. CONGRESS DEMOCRACY

This Congress is concerned at the decision to cut the Branch Commission from 10% to 7.5% effective from 1st January without a Rule Revision to the 2022 Congress and consultation with the Branches, Regions and lay membership.

As the matter is one that is in the Rule Book (Rule 34) then this proposal should have been presented to the Congress in 2022 not introduced with a hope that retrospective approval would be given. This action is not democratic and takes for granted the supreme policy-making body of the Union, Congress and the lay membership elected to make those decisions. Rule 34 clearly states it is Congress that amends the rules not the CEC.

While the need for a change to the Branch Commission may or may not be justified, it has been assumed that all branches should face a cut in resources to conduct their work. Furthermore, an assumption and request was made that branches may wish to consider cutting the Honorarium to their activists as a result of the imposition of this change. This is also an insult to activists and is dictating to Branch's decisions that should be theirs to take at Branch level, not the General Secretary/Treasurer or any other officer of the Union or the CEC.

The proper place for this debate is Congress when the CEC and Treasurer/General Secretary present their full case to Congress for consideration and, as a result, a change of rule or policy is sought, and a decision reached to amend the rule.

This Congress therefore registers its very serious discontent at the way this matter has been dealt with and instructs that no further rule changes are introduced that do not have the authority of Congress and are submitted in the normal way according to the Rule Book and democracy of the Union.

Q22 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH North West & Irish Region

(*Referred*)

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish Region): After moving this probably a last-time speaker, last-time delegate! (*Applause*) Congress, as stated in my motion, read it carefully, I believe in all honesty, and you know me, many of you know me, I have fought from this rostrum over many, many years for the democracy of this Movement. Let's not beat about the bush, I have heard all sorts of stuff about why there is a power. They were wrong. They did not have the power to do what they did and you need to be honest and apologise that you took that power on to yourselves when you did not have it, because you did not have it. Quite simply rule 3 clearly states, no new rules can be made or any of these rules changed, amended, or cancelled, unless agreed by a majority vote at Congress, ordinary or special, or by a ballot of the members.

There is a good reason why that rule is early in the rule book, because it gives you the power, it gives you the authority, it gives you the decision-making, not individuals, not the CEC. Yes, manage the region well but if that leaves branches with a problem what happened to the other 90% that has got us into problems; the 90% of funding that seems to have got us into problems. If you are you telling me that some branches have had £10m locked away, let's be clear, Congress, that was done because some regional secretaries, some senior officers, and the NAU, knew about it. Let's be clear about that.

I know we are in new times, we are moving forward and we will work together, and we will go forward on this, but let's not undermine the democracy of this Movement because it is a slippery slope. You are on the Putin way of reading the rules if you are not careful because, really, if you honestly and truly felt you had the authority why did you come back here: quite simply because you know you did not have the authority because you did not have the authority in the rule book. It quite clearly states in rule 34 as to how those commissions should be paid. It was set by the CEC. If at the end of the day other people have allowed those guidelines to be circumvented who is responsible, not the good working branches who 90% of their time do a really good job, who need those resources, who need those resources, and I do not care whether it is 7.5, 5, or 10, I really do not, because what matters is the battle out there with our members, and what matters to my heart and my vision is the democracy of this Movement, you as delegates who are the supreme body to take those decisions. You should have come back the right way to do it and have it done. I think you need to look at how those mistakes were made. I sat for a long time on the branch working parties. There are issues still unresolved, we know it, there are many branches who do not meet but the commission goes to the regions so now we have to ask into this because you have gone further because in this paper it goes further, branches are no longer trusted with their own money because now we give the power to the regions so you can request the expenditure. I am not happy about that. I think it is a mistake because it takes away the autonomy and the authority from the members. Gary, you are apprentice General Secretary, I know that, we will allow you the odd cloud, Brother, and I have little doubt you will cast a very long and noble shadow, but on this one I have to say I think you got it wrong. I think you circumvented the rule book, but I will work with you to build this movement because it is not just make work better, it is make GMB work better for the branches. Colleagues, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Is there a seconder for that motion? Formally? Thank you. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? Can you make it clear which motion you are opposing? Ken, can you make it clear which motion you are opposing, please?

KEN DANIELS (GMB Wales & South West): Speaking against Motion 33 and speaking with the support of my region. Colleagues, those of you who know me and there is a few of you in this hall today, we know we have seen a lot of changes in this union over the years, but let's be honest, the pandemic and all the effects have been the biggest change that you, I, and everyone we know have ever seen. In that time our ability to campaign has been severely hampered. You can do great things with technology but nothing can replace that ability to reassure and recruit members face-

to-face. Actions speak louder than computers ever have and ever will. The truth is we lost a lot of our members over the last two years. We need to be honest with ourselves. That has had an effect. We have lost a significant amount of money that we should be using to organise, fight, and win, in the workplace. Right now we are still losing money and in doing so we are hampering our own efforts to fight and win for members. We need to focus every penny we have effectively so that we can quickly get the materials and resources needed to get back up and running at full throttle.

Congress, I can understand why people are unhappy but, to be frank, now is not the time to argue the point about exactly who spends the money. This is about priorities. What we cannot do now is waste more time and resources debating this when we need to get back to organising in the workplace. If we reopen this debate I promise you it will run and run and run. What kind of message does this send to our members that our priority is internal squabbles when we face a cost-of-living crisis and energy prices going through the roof. Congress, the priority now is delivering for them not arguing amongst ourselves. Please oppose Motion 33. (*Applause*)

ALEX BRENT (Southern): Speaking in opposition to Motion 33. Very, very quickly the thing I have appreciated this week is actually being able to meet so many great comrades from all over the country and actually understanding about the length and breadth of the union which very often I feel very detached from and I have heard some incredible conversations for and against this. I have gone back and forward with it myself.

I am not happy about the reduction in branch commissions, I understand why other people are not happy about it either, but I am even less happy about the prospect of subs going up. Our subs, and I cannot, cannot, impress upon Congress harder this point, they cannot go up a penny more. A lot of our members are outsourced cleaners, they can barely afford our membership rates as it is and the only reason they can is because they work 10 to 15 hours, so they are on the reduced rate. If they were working 20 hours forget about it, they would not be GMB members, we would not probably even have a campaign against outsourcing in the universities. I will say this, though, I am not completely convinced it is the only way we can avoid this. I do think that we have not exhausted all options. I know some officials will say we have exhausted all the options. I do think Gary is absolutely correct in terms of looking at financial irregularities. I think that absolutely does need to be prioritised but there are a few other things we could probably do in terms of cost cutting. We could look at decreasing our affiliation to the Labour Party, that is one possibility. The reason I say this is just because our leverage currently is not getting them to support £15 an hour for care workers, so I mean, could we not be using that money for strike funds to build our capacity and also to keep our subs steady or low. (*Applause*) So, this is the reason that I am opposing the motion, obviously, with the caveats mentioned above.

Just very, very quickly because I do want to shout out our branch, it is a very small branch, 400 people, we have around five or six grand in the kitty at any one time, I think that is right for our treasurer. We took the cleaners out on strike last year. We were able to pay their wages completely and we were doing this not just for our own budget for through our fundraising, we were able to raise £5,000 in the space of one month. That is how strong our organising capacity is. I am not trying to say ----

THE PRESIDENT: Alex.

ALEX BRENT (Southern): Sorry, I am rambling. Please oppose this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

CIORSTAI DH REICHL E (GMB Scotland): Speaking in opposition to Motion 33. We cannot have socialism for ourselves when our members are struggling and the biggest cost-of-living crisis in 40 years, because I will tell you now, the first thing that will go will be the direct debit with the union fees because they cannot afford it. Our union is emerging from a difficult period in history, by changing for the better, burying the greed of the recent past and the weight of our finances, which are not limitless, must be directed towards the people who need the support the most, and that is the members.

The changes to branch contributions have the backing of our lead democracy in Scotland because we know that no branch that is planning, campaigning, and organising properly will be left behind. These changes can help us make membership fees more affordable. Congress, branches do not make a union, members do. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Any other speakers in opposition? Again, make it clear which motion you are opposing.

CHRISTOPHER MARSH (GMB Wales & South West): Speaking with the support of my region, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Speaking to oppose Motion 41. Congress, our branch supports a membership that covers a huge geographical area and any amount of jobs. Throughout the last two years our members in Wessex Water have been on the front line ensuring that clean water is delivered to millions of homes that rely on us so much. Our branch has been relentless in the support of that we provided to those members but we cannot hide from the fact that our members are suffering financially. They have huge challenges and have to make choices about which bill to pay this month and which one to leave until next month. Our branch must find new ways of reaching those members that have become isolated and ensure that GMB continues to support them because they are a vital part of our branch. Our members have shown great loyalty to us and it is time to repay that loyalty and this branch believes that we must now do everything in our power to reduce our own costs and to ensure that GMB membership remains as affordable as possible. Congress, we are in a financial crisis and having millions of pounds sitting in branch bank accounts is no good for our members, and this is not repaying their loyalty.

Let's be honest, with each other, we all know that if membership subs increase this years it will mean that more members will not afford to be able to pay them. Colleagues, under our existing rules the CEC may use any powers and carry out all acts, duties, and responsibilities, it feels are necessary to achieve our aims.

THE PRESIDENT: Chris, can you just wind up?

CHRISTOPHER MARSH (GMB Wales & South West): Okay. Congress, the Monaghan Report instructed the CEC take more responsibility and use their powers within the rule book to govern the union and protect the union's future. Congress, we oppose that motion. *(Applause)*

HARRY SCOTT (GMB Scotland): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. Speaking against Motion 41. The CEC has shown over the past two difficult years that they have made the right decision at the right time for the future of our union. Members of the CEC are those who we elect and trust to ensure that our union is going in the right direction at all times. This often requires them to take quick action in response to sudden events. We trust in our lay leadership and the CEC to make those decisions in the union's best interest; in this instance that is what they have done. Support your CEC, support your CEC members which you elected to lead our union, vote against this motion and get back to the business of organising our members and branches to make work better. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. No more speakers in opposition. Chris, you do have the right of reply if you would like to come to the rostrum in reply, and as do you, Kevin, if you want to take it.

CHRIS HIBBERD (Southern): Thank you, President. I would just like to clear up one or two things that emerged from the opposition to my motion, or the branch's motion. One small point you may have missed, my motion predates the CEC report. That might explain quite a lot here. This motion is about process. It is more to do with the rules and more particularly rule 10.6. When you look at rule 10.6 it does give the CEC carte blanche to do exactly what it wants. I am simply asking Congress to review rule 10.6 because otherwise you will be facing another mess very similar to this. This is not an opposition to the outcome from the report. This is intended to reinforce, as it says here, "to underpin the democracy of the GMB and the authority of Congress." Thank you, Congress. Thank you, President. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. Kevin? No? Okay, that is fine. Will the General Secretary please give the CEC response to these motions?

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, President, Gary Smith, General Secretary and Treasurer, replying on behalf of the CEC and to say thank you for a fantastic debate. This is what the democracy of the union is about; whether we agree with each other or not, it does not matter. *(Applause)* This is what it has to be about, challenge and debate.

Congress, on Motion 26 you said that the members are struggling financially and that you agreed with the change in order to hold down the cost of subscriptions, and this is what is absolutely central to the debate over branch finances. The report and the position the CEC adopted over branch finances allowed us to put forward a balanced budget for this year and it has allowed us to hold down the cost of membership as well, so the CEC supports your view, and thank you for the motion.

On Motion 27, the motion says "any change must apply to all branches without exception". Comrades, I do understand the sentiment behind the motion, the point about branches paying 16%, I know how much that has antagonised and hurt and we

do want to have consistency, but the qualification for the CEC is that branches that are growing and campaigning must have the ability to access the resources they need. We need to protect regional democracy and we need to protect the branches that are doing the right things, and many of them happen to be small branches.

In terms of Motion 33, we did not ask for referral, comrade. I have to be honest with you, we asked for the motion, and we do even at this late stage, to be withdrawn. Your motion makes assertions that are fundamentally untrue. The CEC is a statutory elected body. I contend that the CEC acted in line with the principles of Monaghan and in line with the rule book, and the decision the CEC made, because we set budgets last year for this year, avoided us putting up subscriptions.

When people talk to us about Congress, it costs £1m to put on this event and by making the decisions they did the CEC protects the supreme governing body of the union; nothing in life and nothing in how we run the union is free. So, we protected Congress with the decisions that the CEC made and I have to say to you as well that you are asking for refunds for branches in the motion, which is entirely inappropriate and given all that we have said about where we are with the budget would just cause us huge problems. We are asking you to withdraw the motion.

In terms of Motion 41, Kevin, we have known each other a long time. I just want to reflect on a couple of things. You talked about Putin and stuff around democracy, I am sorry, brother, it is not appropriate. They are slaughtering people in Ukraine and that type of language is not needed, and it is not helpful. (*Applause*)

You also, Kevin, strayed into the position of criticising staff who cannot get up to the rostrum to defend themselves. If you want to have a go at me that is absolutely fine but the staff at the NAU are not rule book officials and I would say to you, they behave with huge integrity and have worked so hard to get us to the position with a budget. Graham and Alison, you do a great job and thank you for that. (*Applause*)

In terms of the rules, let me just be absolutely clear, we just have to disagree about our interpretation of the democracy and the rule book. As I said to a comrade previously, of course by making the decisions that we have we do protect Congress and I am, and every member of the SMT and CEC is committed to protecting that as well.

In terms of section conferences, you were the president in my section when I ran the Commercial Services Section, our aspiration next year is to have meetings face-to-face because those sectional conferences are fantastic, they are a really important part of democracy but it costs money, brother.

In terms of your interpretation of rule, you talked about branch monies, that is just plain wrong. In the rule book all monies belong to the union and it is absolutely clear. If we had not made those changes we would now be £2.5m adrift in the budget this year and that is why we will be voting on the sub change tomorrow, if we do not get this report through.

Now, we have known each other a long time, I have a huge amount of respect for you, brother, and I think there are things that we could have handled and done differently

and we just have to be honest and contrite about that. Another brother who got up and spoke earlier made some comments last night about how we could have dealt with the communications better. I think we all want to enhance the democracy of the union, we all want to work together to take the union forward, we all want to learn together, and I hope in that spirit you will refer the motion and we will carry on a very honest debate about the best way forward for the organisation. Thank you, President.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Now that all the remaining motions have been debated, I can move to the vote on the Special Report on Branch Commissions. All those in favour of the CEC Special Report please show. Anyone against? That report is carried. *(Applause)*

*The CEC Special Report: Branch Commissions was **ADOPTED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Because that report is carried then Motion 33 will not be voted on because it falls.

*Motion 33 **FELL**.*

THE PRESIDENT: The CEC is supporting Motion 26 from London. Does Birmingham accept the qualification on Motion 27? *(Agreed)* Thank you for accepting the qualification. I will take a vote on Motions 26 and 27. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? Those are carried.

*Motion 26 was **CARRIED***

*Motion 27 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Does North West & Irish Region accept to refer Motion 41?

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Accept, Chair, and certainly there was no intention to refer to staff and if it was misunderstood then I apologise unreservedly.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin, that is much appreciated. *(Applause)* Because they have accepted the referral back there is no need to vote on that. I think we all knew that would be an emotive debate. Thank you for your contributions. *(Applause)*

*Motion 41 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: It now gives me great pleasure to invite another delegate to speak to you about his experiences coming to Britain as a teenager and the support he has found in the union. Please welcome Marek Krolic, a delegate from our North West & Irish Region. *(Applause)* He is being supported by Dave Flanagan. Please can you settle down in your seats? Could we have a bit of quiet so Marek can start, please?

MAREK KROLIC (North West & Irish): *Witam*. Hello. Thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Marek Krolic and I am originally from a town called Konin in Poland. *(Applause)* I am here today to share with you some of my experiences in what happened to me over 10 years ago when I first came to the UK.

Before I do I would like to ask you for patience as I have a condition called cerebral ataxia, which affects my mobility and sometimes my speech. Don't worry, I am not drunk! (*Applause/Laughter*) For this reason I have brought my beautiful assistant Dave. (*Laughter*) He is going to help me tell the story.

I grew up in Poland in a quiet town like any ordinary youngster. I was fit and healthy and I enjoyed my childhood with my mother and brother. I had an opportunity to come to UK to stay with family here who lived in Lancashire. My uncle had a scrap business locally and offered me an opportunity to come and spend the summer months with him and help him in his business. So when I was 15 I travelled to Lancashire. I started to spend time with my uncle. When I first started I wanted to – (*Applause*) – when I first started I wanted to spend time with my cousins, other members of family, on a social level.

As I started to get older and I got to school leaving age it was suggested by my uncle that I come and live more permanently with him and this would give me a better education opportunity than back home. (*Applause*)

DAVE FLANAGAN: You just have to pretend I am Marek now. My ambition at this point was to become an architect and hope to study qualifications in England that would help me achieve that. It soon became apparent once I got here that the educational opportunities were going to be more difficult than I had planned. When I arrived I was told it would cost my uncle about £10,000 per year to put me through college. If I did not pass he would have to pay again for me to re-sit the year. Looking back now I know these were lies.

By this time I was already working full-time for my uncle, about 12 hours per day in the scrap yard. A typical day would involve stripping cars for parts. Even though I was not getting to go to college at this point I was happy and whilst I did not receive a wage I got money when I needed it but my labour was on the assumption that my earnings were being saved to enable me to go to college.

At this time I was living with my uncle at his home. Over time his attitude and approaches towards me changed and it is fair to say that some of his business practices were not as they should have been. As the business got busier so did the demands on my time. I would work longer days, sometimes through the night, and if I made mistakes he was aggressive and violent towards me. More and more he stopped taking me out and meet with us socially and left me behind at the yard to carry on with the work.

I recall on one occasion I had done something wrong and my uncle attacked me forcing my head against the back of a forklift truck resulting in me becoming unconscious and waking up in my own pool of blood. I have no idea how long I had been knocked out. (*Long round of applause*)

These are all Marek's words and he has shared these words many times but I think the emotion of being here today as well, and your support, he is obviously feeling that very strongly, so with his permission he wants me to carry on and tell his story, if that is okay with you. (*Applause*)

On another occasion I was cutting a car with a steel saw and as the car cut in half the blade ended up going into my hand and when I removed the blade from my hand the bone was exposed. Because it was my fault my uncle said he could not take me to the hospital. I ended up wrapping up my hand myself and continuing to work for the rest of the day.

We were fixing a roof and because I was not concentrating enough he took a slate tile and hit me, again I did not get any medical help.

When all this was going on I felt I was obliged to continue to help him with his business on the promise that I would continue to go to college. I was in pain due to both the work and the more persistent attacks on me. Any dangerous work was always given to me. I would often be tasked with piercing gas canisters in fridges, cut up and handle hazardous waste without PPE.

Some people used to notice the marks on me but I would tell people I had tripped or banged myself when working. It was easier to paint myself as a clumsy person rather than a victim of violence.

When I look back at the person I was I cannot recognise myself now. I firmly believed what I was being told and relied on my uncle all the time. I did not feel I could challenge him and felt trapped. I was told not to speak to customers at the yard and was told if anyone in authority came I was to pretend that I could not speak English.

My sleeping arrangements in the scrap yard were very basic. I lived in a small caravan, which was cold and damp and the furniture was damaged. There was no bed so I made a bed from tyres and a corrugated metal sheet and I put a blanket on top. I had some access to cold water but had to boil a kettle to get hot water for washing. I had a single camping stove to do some basic cooking and lived on soup, beans, and bread provided for me.

When I was in trouble I never got to see my Mum. She had been told that I had been arrested and nobody knew where I was. My uncle told me that if I returned to Poland I would be arrested at the airport because I had not done my national service and my passport had run out so would be treated as an illegal immigrant.

I was eventually rescued, and I don't use that word lightly. I do not know where I would be today if it was not for the help of the police, the community alert to my situation, to the branch secretary, Kevin Flanagan, to my problem. At the time I had no idea who Kevin was or the people who bravely spoke up for me but I am now proud to call them good friends.

It has not been an easy journey since the days working for my uncle. After I was rescued I spent nine months in rehabilitation and with help from Kevin, Dave, and Rob, I managed to get my identity and be recognised into the UK systems. I have had counselling and lots of support from NHS workers and carers, and some no doubt were GMB members, and after all this my condition seems to have stabilised and I want others to know what happened and how it affected and, most importantly, ensure that it never happens again.

Today I have a job, I have my independence, I have my own flat, and a car to explore new areas, something I could only have dreamed of 10 years ago. I am an active member of the GMB in my branch, and in my region supporting the equalities scene, and so pleased I have had the opportunity to come here as a delegate this week.

I also like to fundraise for the Ataxia Association, which has included me jumping out of a plane. I decided to dress up as Superman. (*Applause*) He has put, “Unfortunately, I still had needed a parachute”. (*Laughter*)

I also work alongside the Pan-Lancashire Anti-Slavery Network and share my story with others to raise awareness and ensure nobody has to live through what I had to. I hope that I can make a difference to people’s lives by sharing my story and campaign to make sure that no one else has to experience what I did. I ask you to go back to your workplaces and branches and make sure that modern day slavery does not have any place in society today. I do not just mean in your own workplaces, but also in the delivery and supply chains that provide services and products to your companies.

Unfortunately, in my case the Modern Slavery Act was not in place so my uncle was not prosecuted in the way I would have liked. Whilst I get frustrated at times, I also get great strength from my friends, my work, and of course my union, the GMB.

If it was not for the GMB and the work they were doing around Accrington at the time I don’t think I would be here today so, thank you. I have made new friends and have an extended family the size of an army I can turn to.

I would like to say a big thank you to my colleagues in the North West & Irish Region who have encouraged me to get involved and supported me throughout my journey. I would also like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to the Flanagan family, from day one they have supported me at every step. It was them who alerted the police to my situation, they came and got me from the scrap yard, and fought on my behalf when I could not. They helped me get my house, access to benefits, organised training, and made my life worth living again, and I feel part of that family.

Once I felt well enough Dave and Rob even travelled back to Poland with me to meet my Mum who I had not seen for many years. We met at a secret location in Poland so I could spend time with her and they could explain to her what had really happened. Those were probably some of the most special days in my life. I am so happy that I now have a close relationship with my Mum and we visit each other on a regular basis and have some shared holidays together. She is probably watching this now so, “Hello, Mum.” (*Applause*)

MAREK KROLIC: Thank you for your patience and taking time to hear my story. I feel very proud to be part of the amazing GMB family, who share my goals and dreams to helping others and making a difference in other people’s lives. Thank you very much. *Dziękuję Ci.* (*Extended Standing Ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: What can I say? I have heard that story before and I have met his Mum, and she is lovely. We thank you so much, Marek, for sharing your story. I am

so pleased that you found the GMB and I am so proud that you are a member of the GMB. (*Applause*)

Thank you, Congress. That concludes this afternoon's business so you have a bit of extra time to go and enjoy the delights of Harrogate. Thank you for the debate this afternoon and we shall be convening at 9.30 for our remaining business. Have a nice evening.

Congress adjourned.