

GMB

ANNUAL CONGRESS 2014

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**SIS. MARY TURNER MBE
(President)
(In the Chair)**

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Held in:

**Capital FM Arena,
Nottingham**

on:

**Sunday, 8th June 2014
Monday, 9th June 2014
(Tuesday, 10th June 2014: Sectional Conferences)
Wednesday, 11th June 2014
and
Thursday, 12th June 2014**

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**PROCEEDINGS
DAY TWO
(Monday, 9th June 2014)**

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**SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS
MONDAY 9TH JUNE 2014
MORNING SESSION**

(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Will Congress please come to order. Good morning, Congress. Did all of those who had their receptions last night have a good time? *(Calls of "Yes")* I know I did, and I would like to thank the regions that I visited last night, which were Northern, Southern, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, Liverpool and Midland & East Coast. I hope you are all on your toes this morning.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, any questions on the Balance Sheet and Auditors Report need to be submitted in writing to the Congress Office no later than 5:30 pm today.

Before I call Standing Orders, I have a couple of announcements to make. One is that the winner of the iPad mini Sunday draw was Jim Aspinall from the Midland & East Coast Region. Please go to stand A to collect. There will not be one tomorrow but there will be another one, I believe, on Thursday.

The Wortley Hall draw for a bottle of Champagne was won by Kevin Gilroy. Further draws will take place on Tuesday morning.

Thorne Credit Union is GMB's endorsed credit union and would invite all delegates to come and meet them on stand 10 at some point during Congress. TCU Money is now fully incorporated in Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, North West & Irish Region, Midland & East Coast and Southern Region. They look forward to meeting you and together to take this excellent concept and organisation to all GMB members across our regions. That's a thank you from David Castledine. Please pay a visit to the stand.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 3

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call on Helen Johnson to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 3.

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President and Congress, I am moving SOC Report No. 3. Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been advised that the following motions have been withdrawn: Motion 205 – Support the Production of 'Still the Enemy Within' (Working Title) – from Northern Region, and Motion 267 – Disability Benefits – from Southern Region.

Emergency Motions. The SOC has accepted two emergency motions as being in order for debate. Emergency Motion 1: The Royal Mail's Diminishing Role, standing in the name of London Region. SOC recommends it should be heard on Wednesday. Emergency Motion 2: Withdraw of the Independent Living Fund, standing in the name of Southern Region. The SOC recommends that this be heard in this morning's session.

Composite Motions. The SOC is grateful to GMB Scotland and North West & Irish Region for agreeing one further composite motion: Composite no. 28 – Work Capability Assessments – which will also be heard this morning.

President and Congress, I move SOC Report No. 3.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Are there any questions on the Report? *(No response)* All those in favour, please show? Carried.

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 3 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to the business of the day. I will be calling Motion 202, Victimised Miners, to be moved by GMB Scotland; Composite 19, to be moved by Northern and London Region to second, and Motion 206, Cammell Laird, North West & Irish Region.

SOCIAL POLICY: JUSTICE VICTIMISED MINERS

202. VICTIMISED MINERS

"This Conference notes cabinet papers released under the 30 year rule shows that despite claims from the then Conservative Government that only 20 pits were threatened they were actually earmarking 75 collieries for closure with an estimated loss of 65,000 jobs.

This Conference notes that further information suggests the Government planned to use police tactics to escalate the dispute during the 1984/5 miners strike.

This Conference considers this to be part of a plan to attack the organised labour movement as well as the coal industry which has subsequently destroyed man working communities in the coalfield. This Conference therefore welcomes the commitment of Scottish Labour Party Leader Johann Lamont that a Labour led government in Holyrood after the 2016 elections would hold an inquiry into Scottish miners convictions during the dispute, and calls on the current First Minister Alex Salmond to hold an inquiry immediately into these convictions and put justice for those wrongly convicted ahead of his obsession with Scottish Independence".

SCOTTISH LABOUR PARLIAMENTARY BRANCH
GMB Scotland

(Carried)

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): President and Congress, I am moving Motion 202 – Victimised Miners. GMB Scotland welcomes the commitment from Scottish Labour to hold an inquiry into Scottish miners' convictions. Thirty years ago British miners embarked on a strike over pit closures, and after the year-long struggle that ensued the biggest losers were ordinary miners. The industrial turmoil dragged on for 12 months, it dragged down the union, its people and their industry. Families who believed they were fighting for their communities as well as their livelihoods, speak of their hardships and images they invoke were painful to behold. This dispute was not about pay and conditions; it was about Thatcher's economic vision. It was about planned pit closures and an emergency policy and energy policy which placed less emphasis on coal mined in Britain. Thatcher was determined not to lose to the miners who brought down Heath.

This motion calls for justice for victimised miners and justice for wrongly convicted miners during the 1984-85 strike. Their only crime was that they took strike action to defend their jobs, to defend their communities and to defend their families. Striking miners who had never broken the law found themselves, for the rest of their lives, labelled criminals. In Scotland, Kenny McCaskill, the Justice Minister in the Scottish Government, has been urged to erase the criminal records of five hundred convicted striking miners. These convictions were an outrage to fairness and an outrage to justice. We all know that this was nothing more than a collusion between the Thatcher Government, the police and the courts in an attempt to crush the strike and, with it, the National Union of Mineworkers.

Congress, this motion calls on the First Minister of Scotland to hold an immediate inquiry into these convictions and to put justice for those miners who were wrongly convicted ahead of the Scottish Government's obsession with independence. We have to address the reality of these miners who, in their hundreds, were embattled and impoverished from months of strike action. Support this motion and support justice.

(Applause)

SIS. A. DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): Congress, I second Motion 202 on Victimised Miners. Like my colleague has said before me, GMB Scotland welcomes the commitment from Scottish Labour to hold an inquiry into the Scottish miners' convictions, but this should be extended to the whole of the UK. Mining colleagues in Tynside, Yorkshire and many other areas all suffered at the hands of a ruthless government determined to undermine and undervalue the rights of the working class throughout the country, regardless of the industry, and they made examples of the miners for everyone else to see and gave an insight into what their intentions were. Not only were lies told to the public, the Government lied to their peers as well. Lives of the miners who were charged were shattered, to say the least. Families were ripped apart and they were forced into poverty and, for all we know, these miners could have been blacklisted. There is some food for thought. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Annette. I call the Northern Region.

1984-5 MINERS STRIKE AND THE 30 YEAR RULE COMPOSITE 19

C19. Covering Motions:

- 203. 30 YEAR RULE *(London Region)*
- 204. MINERS' STRIKE *(Northern Region)*

1984-5 MINERS STRIKE AND THE 30 YEAR RULE

Congress is appalled to learn what thousands of people in mining communities have strongly suspected for 30 years relating to the 1984-85 miners' strike.

Congress was not surprised to read in the wake of the recently released Thatcher papers, under the 30 year rule, following her death, that despite the denials whilst in office and after, that senior Cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister, micromanaged the Government's side of the strike, whilst publicly claiming to be innocent bystanders.

Congress notes that all along, as many of us believed at the time, she and her henchman Ian MacGregor of the National Coal Board had discussed the intention to close over 70 collieries with the loss of 50,000 plus jobs as claimed by Arthur Scargill, General Secretary of the NUM whilst publicly claiming the number to be around 20.

Had that fact been known at the time with its likely consequences, it would almost certainly had had a huge impact on the feelings of the general public at that time.

Congress notes that senior Cabinet Ministers deliberately misled the country; further notes that when those striking to protect their communities seemed to be on the verge of victory, the Government plotted to bring in the armed forces to avoid defeat;

Congress therefore believes that there is a solid case for reviewing the length of time that such important facts and Cabinet papers remain hidden and furthermore demands a full independent inquiry into the then Government's handling of the 1984-85 miners' strike and closure of 70 plus mines.

Northern Region to Move London Region to Second

(Carried)

SIS. L. AVERILL (Northern): Congress, I move Composite Motion 19: Miners Strike and the 30 Year Rule. Congress, if ever we were in any doubt what a Tory Government is like, we just have to look at the actions towards the working class since 2010. If ever we were in any doubt what a Tory Government is like, we just have to look at how they treated the families of the Hillsborough disaster. If ever we were in any doubt of what a Tory Government is like, we just have to look at how things were during the years 1984 to 1985.

1984 was supposed to be the year of the “Big Brother” society. Well, we know, Congress, that that is exactly what happened. It was Big Brother Tory-style. The Tory Government plotted to build up the coal stocks to take on the NUM. The Tory Government used its network of friends in the media and the police to spin to the general public that they were the good guys and referred to the workers as “The Enemy Within”. It was a Tory Government that used all the scheming and plotting to rape and pillage an industry that they long wanted to see closed down. The Tories never forgave the mineworkers for 1972 to 1974.

During the strike, in the mid-‘80s, the Tories happily saw communities broken up and now we rely on imported coal for our energy needs. Congress, that is not a price worth paying. There should be an inquiry as to what went on at the highest level. The 30-Year Rule is a rule that is now out of date. It is used to protect those who make wrong decisions and which are not in the national interest. The simple fact is that had the British public been aware of what we suspected, the Tory Government would not have got what they wanted, and this country would be in a much better place. Please support. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lynn. Secunder?

SIS. F. FRANKLIN (London): Congress, I second Composite 19. President, history has shown what an excellent cover-up tool the 30 Year Rule has been for governments of both parties. What monumental cover ups will this bunch of clowns in this Government reveal in 2044? But, Congress, the recent revelations about the miners’ strike in 1984 are more than just a cover up. They show a sinister plot to destroy a complete industry, they show a deliberate plot to destroy a trade union and they show that the violence of the police at Orgreave and other pits was condoned. They show that plans were afoot to use the British Army against British citizens to meet Thatcher’s ideological aim, something completely out of place in a true democracy. Colleagues, all of this was denied by Thatcher, her cronies and her poodle press.

The question is this. Is it right that such things should be kept from the public for so long? The events of 1984 and 1985 had an enormous effect on hundreds of thousands of people. If those facts had been known at the time by the general public, which side would have had the public’s sympathy? What would have been the consequences for Thatcher? Certainly not a state funeral.

Colleagues, this composite motion calls for a review into the length of time that dirty washing can be hidden. I urge you to support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I call Motion 206 – Cammell Laird 1984 – to be moved by North West & Irish Region.

**CAMMELL LAIRD 1984
MOTION 206**

206. CAMMELL LAIRD 1984

This Conference calls on the GMB to send an archivist into Churchill College to scrutinise Margaret Thatcher's memoirs with the intention of ascertaining the truth about the 1984 strike at Cammell Laird.

Z15 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. SMITH (North West & Irish): Congress, I move Motion 206. President and delegates, the first tour of Thatcher's papers confirmed what we already knew, which was the Government's plan to privatise British Shipbuilders and close Cammell Laird in 1984. Confidential Cabinet papers also revealed their plan to blame the closure on the industrial action being taken at that time.

Congress, this year is the 30th anniversary of 37 GMB members being jailed for a month for taking legal industrial action. Discussions on the dispute were not confined to one Cabinet meeting, so we need to dig deeper to find the likes of who made the decision to send them to a top-security prison and to put them in a top-security wing, locked up for 23 hours a day. Which unions agreed to compulsory selective redundancies and no-strike agreements during the strike, and why were the strikers represented at an industrial tribunal by a legal officer, when British Shipbuilders had a QC, the result being that the case was lost on gross misconduct, which has been condemned by a judge in the European Court as "disgraceful"?

Congress, we need these answers. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Graham. Secunder?

(The Motion was formally seconded from the floor)

Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland): Comrades, we didn't have to wait 30 years to know what went on during the miners' strike. The capitalist system will always attack. To go on strike today we have to go through one hell of a palaver. What really gets me is, with us having a Labour Government for 18 years, that they never touched on the law to change it. We all knew what was going on with the miners, and my personal opinion is that the TUC let them down on the day. *(Applause and cheers)* When they broke the miners, they broke the unions, and now we have a soft underbelly, and it is time we woke up and tried to fight back again. The capitalist system will always use the Army and the police, and we have to do something. Thanks. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Pat. I call Steve Kemp to speak for the CEC.

BRO. S. KEMP (National Officer): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. I have been asked to comment briefly on Motion 202 and Composite Motion 19.

Congress, Motions 202 and Composite 19 are all supported and, as a former coalminer, I feel really privileged to come to this rostrum to speak on these motions today. In particular, what with the Congress being in Nottinghamshire in 2014, 30 years ago I was not even allowed into the county, never mind allowed to speak. Congress, these motions are calling for a few things from inquiries into victimised

miners through to the 30 Year Rule on Cabinet papers and then to the Army's involvement and the need for a full inquiry. I well remember Thatcher and her Ministers constantly informing the British public that the Government had no intention whatsoever to close 70 pits and that the leadership of the NUM was scaremongering and telling lies. This, of course, was backed up by people who remember Ian MacGregor, the Coal Board chief. I have *here* a letter from Mr. MacGregor, sent to me, headlined: "Your Future in Danger", and it certainly was. It will give a lesson to everybody that when the state is against you, they will do anything to tell lies. He said this: "I have been accused of planning to butcher the industry. I have no such intention or desire. I want to build up the industry. That we plan to do away with 70,000 jobs is not true and that we plan to close down 86 pits, leaving only 100 working collieries." In block capital letters, underlined, he said: "IF THESE THINGS WERE TRUE, THEN I WOULD NOT BLAME MINERS FOR GETTING ANGRY OR FOR BEING DEEPLY WORRIED, BUT THESE THINGS ARE ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE AND I STATE THAT CATEGORICALLY AND SOLEMNLY. YOU HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY MISLED."

Let's take a little look at that. Nearly 200 coal mines have been shut, 200,000 miners out of work, as are thousands more in related industries, three deep mines working today, two of which are closing, leaving one open, communities across the UK devastated, many even now, 30 years on, have still not recovered and with Britain's energy policy a complete and utter shambles, I think this Congress has the right to ask who told the truth and who told the lies during that dispute. (*Cheers and applause*)

Thatcher's gone, MacGregor's gone and Norman Tebbit... well, nearly gone. We should never forget what happened in that period.

Last year we had a State funeral, in effect, for Mrs. Thatcher. We saw the establishment follow behind, our enemies. We saw epitaphs galore from the rich and the privilege saying how brilliant she was. I have used this line before but I will use it again: As far as I am concerned, the epitaph to Thatcher on her gravestone should be a simple one: "Under this sod lies another." It should be as simple as that. (*Applause*)

The question is this. An incoming Labour government should look into the issue of the thousands of miners who were victims of trumped-up convictions. It should order a full independent inquiry of whether the Army was involved, and it should lead no stone unturned to make sure that the general public are aware of the facts as to what happened during that dispute, and, in particular, what happened at Orgreave. By the end of the strike, many miners were left not only with criminal records but with the physical and mental effects of police beatings. At the end of the strike, there were 11,291 arrests. Eight thousand people had been charged, 20,000 injured or hospitalised, 200 served time in prisons and two were killed on the picket lines, 966 miners were sacked, many of whom, as one tribunal claimed, did not get their jobs back. The policing of the strike and the government's admission that they lied to the country on the true figures of the pit closures in recent disclosed Cabinet papers should mean that if a real Labour Government comes in next year, we should not have to demand inquiries and such, but it should be natural for a Labour Government to act because mining communities up and down the UK deserve full justice and to know the true facts of Thatcher's Government during that dispute and that period in office. Support Motion 202 and Comp 19. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steve, very much, indeed. I will now put Motion 202, Composite Motion 19 and Motion 206 to the vote. The CEC is supporting. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Motion 202 was CARRIED.

Composite 19 was CARRIED.

Motion 206 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to Political: Labour Party & Constitution Issues, and I will be calling Motions 151 and 152 to be moved by Birmingham Region, Motion 153 to be moved by Yorkshire Region and Motion 154, to be moved by Southern Region.

**POLITICAL: LABOUR PARTY & CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES
BRANCH LABOUR PARTY DELEGATES
MOTION 151**

151. BRANCH LABOUR PARTY DELEGATES

This Conference recognises the importance to the union of its branch delegates to constituency Labour Party General Management and Executive Committees and is concerned with the lack of connection between the GMB organisation and these delegates. This can result in delegates pursuing policies that are different from the position of the GMB Nationally and local GMB branches.

Conference therefore instructs the CEC to come forward with a system to ensure that all branch delegates to Constituency Labour Party General Management and Executive Committees are fully briefed on current GMB policy therefore eliminating any potential confusion.

With the next General Election upon us in 2015 Conference instructs the CEC to take action on this matter of urgency as we need to ensure the Labour Party secures every opportunity of gaining a majority at that election.

W50 WELLINGTON BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. BOULD (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, I am moving Motion 151 – Branch Labour Party Delegates. Branches are the cornerstone, it would appear to me, of our organisation, our very being as a union and as we heard yesterday in the Special Report. So how do we support delegates from within our branches when they represent the Union in the political structures of the Labour Party? It is critically important that they are supported. Some good stuff is going on already through political officers, like regular hard-copy briefings, but we need to do some more systematic support, particularly as delegates argue the case so that they can sharpen up their understanding of our campaigns and the actions developed through this Congress. Maybe some post-Conference face-to-face workshops at a local level are needed.

So what is needed and what is wanted to support in order to advance the union cause within the legitimate political structures of the Labour Party? If we do not do this to take those campaigns forward, there will end up being a vacuum in the Party, it seems to me. We need to do that at a local level. I move.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Graham. Secunder? Somebody speak to me.

(The motion was formally seconded from the floor)

**GENERAL ELECTION 2015
MOTION 152**

152. GENERAL ELECTION 2015

This Conference agrees that in the interest of working people it's essential that Labour wins the 2015 General Election. Therefore regardless of any difference of opinion there may be between the Union and the Labour Party on

how votes are cast within the Party. Congress pledges to give as much support as it can financial and physical to help secure a Labour victory in the 2015 election.

B41 BIRMINGHAM RUBBER BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. BOULD (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, I move Motion 152 – General Election 2015. President and delegates, we want to win, we need to win but not at any cost, not at the cost of our members' interests. It is not a blank cheque. We expect from leaders in the Labour Party some respect. We want a return on our investment, which means personal investments by many, financial investments by many and we expect, really, to be taken seriously. We expect regular reporting back from all levels of the Party to us. We expect Labour to walk the walk, not just talk the talk with our Union, so that our members, our families and our communities can reap a rich benefit. That means accountability, both in terms of legislation and in terms of how those politicians vote for that legislation. I move.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Graham. Secunder?

BRO. M. MACDONALD (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and second time on the big stage. *(Applause)* Congress, even though I am seconding this motion, I am not without major concerns about the GMB supporting the Labour Party. Even though I will be voting for Labour in 2015, I am not doing it because I have tremendous faith in them, but I am doing it because five more years of this shower in charge doesn't bear thinking about, and I am not going to resort to voting for Adolf Farage and his party. I don't think I am any different to any person in this room. If Labour wins the next election, I don't want to hear the bullshit or the same excuses. We want to see big change in our favour. *(Applause)* I even think our General Secretary sees it that way because, as he said in the fringe meeting yesterday, "They will your babies, they will even kiss your arses to get a vote", and he did have the bottle to stop their pocket money.

The motion states: "Congress pledges to give as much support as it can financial and physical to help secure a Labour victory in the 2015 election." We need to make it crystal clear that if we give Labour financial support, we are not an open cheque book. We must ask them to deliver our agenda. Let's just remember. It's our money, we demand it and they work for us. I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Melvyn. I now ask for the mover of Motion 153 to come to the rostrum.

A NEW CLAUSE 4 MOTION 153

153. A NEW CLAUSE 4

This Conference calls for a new Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution, with the following explicit commitments:

1. A National Health Service, free at the point of use, based on need not ability to pay
2. A fair and equitable system of tax
3. A fairer distribution of the nation's wealth
4. An education system giving the chance of lifelong learning to all
5. An economy which benefits all not the few, with public ownership of utilities, rail transport and other industries of strategic importance
6. A path from cradle to grave, build on the foundations of the above, giving every citizen the chance to achieve their aspirations and allowing them to live with dignity, without fear of poverty.

PARKGATE BRANCH

(Carried)

BRO. L. DAGNALL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 153. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* President and Congress, the motion I move this morning offers a very good answer to the question: “What is the point of the Labour Party and why should our members support it?” The motion is about taking our Party back to its roots, but it is also about giving it a new sense of purpose for the 21st century. It proposes a new Clause 4.

The original Clause 4 defined the Labour Party’s commitment to public ownership, the basis of our programme for decades. This was infamously removed by Comrade Blair. As it currently stands, Clause 4 commits Labour, vaguely, to democratic socialism. Whilst I welcome any commitment to socialism in the modern Labour Party, I think we can do a little bit better than that. I think we can positively set out what we mean by “socialism” in the 21st century. This is especially important given frequent complaints that the political parties today are all the same, relentlessly negative in the way they conduct politics, trying to offend as few people as possible and inspire no one. So renewing our Labour Party’s Clause 4 would make a start towards renewing our Party as something that millions of working people could once more take pride in.

So the motion proposes that Labour sets out in Clause 4 its intention to build a country where we treasure good education by making it freely available to all throughout their entire lives, a country where healthcare is driven by need, not by greed, a country where wealth is fairly distributed and a fair system of taxation funds our public services with those that have more, giving more. We want to see a country where the pillars of the economy, those essential services like utilities and transport, are owned by us, the public, and work for the public good. Most of all, Congress, we want to see a country motivated by respect for the dignity of each and every person, and offering support to every person in achieving their goals and aspirations. I am convinced by this definition of socialism. I think it should be the basis for the Labour Party’s programme in the coming century. It provides a vision of a country that we could build, and with millions suffering it provides a vision of a country that we urgently need to build. That is why our members founded and continued to support a Labour Party. It is only with representation to a party of working people and for working people that we can build a country in our interests.

Congress, this motion would breath a renewed sense of purpose into our Labour Party. I request your support for this motion, proposing a new Clause 4 for the Labour Party. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Lewis.

BRO. C. HAMPTON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second the motion. I don’t know about you, but everywhere I go, at work, in pubs and clubs, talking to older people and the not-so-old people, people say to me, “I just don’t know what the Labour Party stands for any more.” Instead of clear principles, easy to communicate, we have endless focus groups, consultations and surveys of the electorate’s opinions with the danger of creating policy on fashion and whim, and leaving the Party hostage to the tabloid press and hostile media, with its soft racism and conservative agenda that it peddles. We should be the opinion formers.

With the loss of Clause 4, the Party is seen as rudderless, too often leaving people to believe, rightly or wrongly, that there isn’t a fag paper between the main parties in terms of their vision and policy. If one thing that the voters’ dalliance with UKIP has shown it’s that people are crying out for conviction politicians, not the slick movers and shakers who adjust their policies to go along with the latest opinion poll or newspaper headline.

This motion sets out the clear principles on which the Party can rally, concepts which can be easily communicated. Party strategists think that only by targeting policies at key voters in swing constituencies will they be able to come to govern, but like most short-term strategies it has long-term consequences, leaving the Party neither attractive to working-class people or those in the Establishment. This new Clause 4 will be easily communicated and distinguish the Party from the Con-Dems, and it will bring a sense of belonging to members who want to be more than just cheerleaders for a distant Parliamentary Labour leadership. I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. I call Motion 154, to be moved by Southern Region.

INTERNAL LABOUR PARTY ELECTIONS CODE OF CONDUCT MOTION 154

154. INTERNAL LABOUR PARTY ELECTIONS CODE OF CONDUCT

Congress believes that the Labour Party benefits from its diverse foundations in the constituency membership, the affiliated unions, and the socialist societies. Only Labour can draw upon the experience of millions of working people.

Congress believes that the Labour Party benefits from its traditions of robust and democratic debate, and can be proud of the democratic manner in which its internal elections take place. Over 175000 people voted for Ed Miliband to be leader of the party, including 119000 trade unionists.

Congress believes that the integrity of elections, whether selecting the party leader, selecting candidates for elections, or other internal elections, requires confidence that the process is transparent, above board and fair to all candidates.

Congress affirms its support for the Code of Conduct, which requires Labour Party staff to act impartially in all internal Labour Party elections.

W15 WILTSHIRE & SWINDON BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. C. WATTS (Southern): Conference, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)*
The greatest strength in the Labour Party is, undoubtedly, our link to three million trade unionists throughout the country. This brings the experience, the day-to-day concerns and gives a voice to ordinary working people directly into the political process. I am proud that the votes of the ordinary working people through organised affiliated trade unions help to elect the leader of the Labour Party. The fact that Ed Miliband has been elected by members of trade unions, members of the Party, MPs and MEPs, gives him a far greater mandate than Cameron, Clegg and, of course, of Field Marshal Farage of the People's Army. The GMB is a lay-member led Union and we have confidence in our own internal processes, and we have confidence that our full-time staff will act impartially and adhere with the defined code of conduct with our own internal elections and processes. The Labour Party also has the same code of conduct, and their staff should also act impartially and allow the lay members to go about their business unfettered.

At last year's Congress there were complaints about possible interference – I choose my words carefully – by full-time staff in guiding delegates as to who to vote for in the CAC – that is the Congress Arrangements Committee – elections, which is a very important committee as far as the agenda of the Congress every year is concerned. Obviously, this is an internal matter for the Labour Party and I have every confidence that the NEC will investigate and act appropriately. However, we call on Congress to re-affirm our commitment that we agree with the staff code of conduct that the Labour Party staff remain impartial in internal elections and selections. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. Secunder?

BRO. S. OAKES (Southern): Congress, I am supporting Motion 154. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

President and Congress, democracy is in my heart and I know it is in the heart of this Union. Its proof lies in each and every one of you who are here, and every motion that is debated and voted upon. But democracy, as you have heard from Chris, can be fragile. Like a beautiful cut glass, it can be easily shattered. Democracy is easily lost and it must be defended and protected. It is a fundamental principle of equality and fairness. In order to strengthen democracy, in order to make it unbreakable, it must be seen, it must be scrutinised and it must be transparent at every level. The code of conduct ensures that that will happen and it has to be implemented. Congress, I support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debates *(No response)* In that case, I call Cath Speight.

SIS. C. SPEIGHT (National Political Officer): Good morning, Congress and President. Motions 152 and 153 both contain sentiments that we can all agree with. We agree with Birmingham & West Midlands that it is essential for working people that Labour wins the next general election, and we should use our resources to make that happen, but we cannot blindly follow where the Labour Party might lead us if that is in contradiction with the wishes and policy of our Union. With that slight qualification, the CEC recommends support.

Likewise, as with Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, there is absolutely nothing to disagree with in this sentiment and aspirations of your motion. We want a fairer tax system, NHS free at the point of need and not the ability to pay, an education system delivering life-long learning and returning public utilities to public control. Our qualification is, however, that less than 12 months away from a general election is not the time to ask the Party to start navel gazing and debating the introduction of a new Clause 4. We will be campaigning for the inclusion of all of these aspirations within the policy-making process that is going on now and we will be fighting to make sure that they are included in the manifesto for the general election. With that qualification, the CEC asks Congress to support both motions. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Does Birmingham & West Midlands Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Does Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you. I now call the vote on Motions 151, 152, 153 and 154. The CEC support and the regions accept the qualifications. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Motion 151 was CARRIED.

Motion 152 was CARRIED .

Motion 153 was CARRIED.

Motion 154 was CARRIED.

LAUNCH OF GMB POLITICAL FUND BALLOT

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I now ask Cath Speight to introduce the Launch of the GMB Political Fund Ballot. You will now hear from our National Political Officer, Cath Speight.

SIS. CATH SPEIGHT (National Political Officer): Good morning, again. Congress and President, GMB exists to challenge and change the existing order. Those are words that are inscribed on the wall of the GMB Headquarters in Euston in the museum that shows where our Union came from, what we fought for

and what we have won. We have been a campaigning union from our inception. Throughout our history we have seen injustice and we have fought it. Let's take the very first campaign that our Union fought 125 years ago, the campaign for an eight-hour day. It was a campaign to give working people life outside the workplace, to create jobs and to bring down unemployment, to create healthier and happy families and give dignity to working people. We won that battle. It took a few years, but we won it. Through action on the ground and through working people organising politically, we won.

But, Congress, when we fought for an eight-hour day 125 years ago we didn't quite have the reams of legislation telling us what we could do and when we could do it. Thanks to the government of she-who-will-not-be-named, every 10 years we have to ask our members whether the Union should hold a political fund, and 2014 is that year. We must vote "Yes", and that is not just because, from a purely personal perspective, I would be out of a job without eh political fund, but it is because politics matters. It is easy to think about politics as MPs and what happens in the House of Commons, but it is so much more than that. Politics is everyday life. It is the investment in the tram system that some of us travelled to get to Congress today; it's the wages of the staff in the hotels that we are staying in and it is whether the trains that we head home on, at the end of Congress, are owned by the public or by profit-making firms. It is the schools our children and grandchildren attend and it's our rights in the workplace. The political fund is not just about party politics. It is about our ability to stand up and speak out for our members when we see injustice. It is about our ability to organise.

In the last year without a political fund we could not have taken on tax avoidance or the blacklists in the way that we have. We couldn't have won a living wage in Ealing and now over a hundred local authorities are paying the living wage. We would not have won newspaper headlines taking on the millionaire Tories who built their empires under the right-to-buy and now buy-to-let. The political fund ballot matters, it matters to our jobs, it matters to our workplaces and it matters to our communities and the world that we want to see. GMB exists to challenge and change the existing order. Please go out into your workplaces and branches and encourage to vote and to vote "Yes" for the political fund. Come along at lunch time and find out how you can help. Visit our stand, pick up leaflets and posters to take back to your workplaces or download the material on our new Political Department dedicated website, which is www.gmbpolitics.org.uk. Please, let's all go out from here and campaign for a "Yes" and carry on this important work. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, I now call Motions 134, to be moved by Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, and 135, to be moved by London.

POLITICAL: GENERAL
SUPPORT FOR THE CENTRE FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL STUDIES
MOTION 134

134. SUPPORT FOR THE CENTRE FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL STUDIES

This Conference fully endorses the GMB's support for the Centre for Labour and Social Studies (CLASS).

This think tank is a perfect mix of the heart and intellect of the Labour Movement, comprising of academics and, trade union and community activists. This means its publications are accessible and can easily be understood by all. However, the budget of CLASS is limited and, unlike other more right wing think tanks, does not automatically have the ears of the press.

Conference calls on the GMB to continue to support CLASS and urges all GMB members to become involved with CLASS and to promote both the organisation and its publications.

PARKGATE BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

BRO. N. TOWNEND (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 134. I am a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* What is CLASS? It's the Centre for Labour and Social Studies. CLASS is a new think tank established in 2012 to act as a centre for left-wing debate and discussion, originating in the labour Movement. CLASS works for a broad coalition of supporters, academics, experts to develop and advance alternative policies for today. Through the production of high-quality, intellectually compelling publications and events, CLASS seeks to shape ideas that can inspire the trade union Movement. CLASS wants to cement a broad alliance of social forces and to influence policy and development to ensure that the political agenda is on the side of the working people. CLASS is developing new economic and industrial policies that promote growth instead of austerity and puts fairness at the heart of the economic strategy.

Congress, what does CLASS do? CLASS produces briefings, policy papers and projects. Projects are already underway that address issues of growth and the economy; work, pay, hours, equality, security and aspiration, democracy and welfare, amongst many others. CLASS organises seminars and events across the country to encourage discussion on new policy ideas.

Congress, who is involved? CLASS was set up by Unite the Union, GMB and the Institute of Employment Rights, and has the support of a growing number of trade unions. Our regional secretary, Tim Roache, is the Chair of CLASS. The organisation is run day-to-day by the staff, whose work is overseen by a management committee. Alongside this, CLASS has an impressive and ever-growing national advisory panel of experts who offer guidance on policy direction.

December 2012 saw the 70th anniversary of the Beveridge Report, significant not only for its content but also for its context. In the middle of World War Two, with a budget deficit and a national debt that makes today look negligible, the report laid the basis for the radical reforms introduced by the Labour Government in 1945.

Today insecurity haunts our nation once again. We have mass unemployment, a desperate homes crisis, the slashing of public services and our education service and our National Health Service gradually being privatised, welfare benefits for the disabled drastically cut, redundancies and closures occurring on a daily basis and living standards stagnating or, at worse, falling for those lucky enough to retain a job. But, Congress, there is an alternative. If wartime Britain could summon up the energy and hope to better world in 1945, our present generation most certainly can, too. Seventy years ago the Beveridge Report announced the pursuit of a new settlement, one that would dramatically change the structure of Britain for the better. With this in mind, we find the giant evils of today well in existence: inequality, grief, poverty and despair. Congress, if we are ever to defeat these evils, we need organisations like CLASS. Please support CLASS. Download and read the booklet given to your members. Get educated. Please support. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nigel. Secunder?

SIS. A. BURLEY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second Motion 134 – CLASS. Good morning, delegates and visitors. If you attended Congress last year, you will remember Owen Jones address Congress, and I am very sure that many of you went to the fringe meeting where he spoke about the Centre for Labour and Social Studies, which is CLASS. CLASS is a think tank producing pamphlets and discussion documents. It is a mixture of academics, trade unionists and community activists, offering alternatives to the policies and perceptions put out by the right. Don't be put off by the term "Think tank" or the fact that most of the documents are written by academics. Thanks to the inclusion of trade

unionists, all the literature produced is readable and can be easily understood, especially the *Mythbuster* series of leaflets. All these documents are available as hardcopies or downloadable from the CLASS website.

There has always been a link between great intellectuals and the labour Movement, like Harold Glasky and Richard Tony, amongst others. However, we seem to have lost the intellectual high ground to the right wing. CLASS is a way of re-taking that ground and producing alternative policies, starting debates and questioning why we have to accept this status quo. But CLASS does not have the ear of the press or the budget to match, such as the Adam Smith Institute or the Centre for Policy Studies. That's why it needs the support of this Union. Apart from the obvious financial support, it also needs union activists to make the work of CLASS known to a wider audience. I am not suggesting leaving a load of leaflets or discussion papers in your work canteen, but that we all attend various meetings or have discussions at work.

This is a quote from a CLASS document: "Those taking courses use and reference CLASS documents in essays and dissertations. Make the work of CLASS be known. Bring the arguments out into the open. CLASS is not a policy-making organisation. It is there to open up debate to let us decide on alternative policies." I call upon the GMB to continue to support CLASS and for everyone here to use the resources produced by CLASS to discuss and formulate alternative policies, to campaign for the policies that our members deserve. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I ask London Region to move Motion 135.

COMBINING TRADE UNION STRENGTH AND ORGANISATION MOTION 135

135. COMBINING TRADE UNION STRENGTH AND ORGANISATION

This Congress urges the GMB to seek to encourage all Trade Unions, not just those affiliated to the Labour Party to jointly produce and distribute pro-Labour materials in the run up to the 2015 election.

Any repetition of the Tories either alone or in coalition with either the Liberal Democrats or UKIP would be a disaster in which they would seek to reduce the size of the state to the detriment of those dependent on benefits and services.

BARKING BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. GILLIGAN (London): Congress, I move Motion 135. As a Movement, we now have less than a year to the next general election, less than a year to get our act together, less than a year to ensure that the Tories are not re-elected and less than a year to ensure that their sidekicks, the Liberal Democrats, suffer the same fate they suffered in the European and local elections last month and in the Newark by-election last week. But the lessons of those elections is that elections are won by organisation and systematic campaigning. Unions Together, the organisation of the Labour affiliated unions, already does some great work in co-ordinating the political work of the 15 Labour affiliated unions, but there are more than 50 unions affiliated to the TUC. We, therefore, have a job of work to do, a job that encourages those non-affiliated unions to join with us over the next 11 months to ensure the return of a Labour Government. The alternative is a Tory Government with an agenda of unfinished business, a Tory Government who see themselves as the heirs of Thatcher, a Tory Government that will further dismantle employment rights, who will continue to dismantle the NHS and the welfare state. We, therefore, have a duty, as one of the leading Labour affiliated unions, to unify the whole trade union Movement, to ensure

the return of a Labour Government in May 2015. The alternative is too dire to even consider. We bring a message of unity and hope to all trade unions and their members. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Secunder?

SIS. C. LEE (London): Congress, I second Motion 135. President and delegates, what do the trade unions that affiliate to the Labour Party and those that do not have in common? The answer is, colleagues, a Government that hates both of them. No trade union, whether they affiliate to Labour or not, can afford to have another Tory Government or a Tory-led Coalition Government in 2015. That scenario just does not bear thinking about. That would be a recipe for more anti-trade union laws, less employment rights, more benefit cuts and more cuts to public services, more for the rich and less for the rest of us. It does not matter whether trade unions support Labour financially. They all have resources which can be used collectively to promote Labour in 2015 and they most certainly need to.

Our MPs can involve other trade unions in supporting Labour. All unions have considerable communication departments. Surely, it is not too much for them to work together producing pro-Labour communications and getting the vote out. Congress, this is an no brainer. remember the old GMB logo: "Working Together Helps". It will have to if we are to win in 2015. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Claire. Does anyone wish to come in on these debates? (*No response*) So I move to the vote. The CEC are supporting them. All those in favour of Motions 134 and 135, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Motion 134 was CARRIED.

Motion 135 was CARRIED.

ADDRESS BY MARGARET CURRAN MP

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, you will see that I have been joined on the stage by one of our guest speakers today. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Margaret Curran MP to this GMB Congress. Welcome, Margaret. (*Applause*) She comes from a solid working class background. Her parents were a labourer and a cleaner. She worked for Strathclyde regional council as a welfare rights and community worker in the '80s. She was elected to the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow Bayliston in 1999, where she rose to Minister for Parliamentary Business in 2004. Margaret has been an MP for Glasgow East since 2010 and reversed a massive SNP majority, earned at in the 2008 by-election. On her arrival in Westminster, she was quickly promoted to Shadow Minister for DWP, and she is now Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. GMB is the leading union in Scotland campaigning for a NO vote and Margaret is working closely with us. Margaret, please address Congress. (*Applause*)

MARGARET CURRAN MP: Thank you, very much, Mary, for that very kind introduction. Congress, it is a great honour to address your annual Congress, at the very outset let me take the opportunity to pay tribute to your work day in and day out on behalf of working people. It is a privilege to be here to address this particular union, because this is the trade union that led the campaign for equal pay, that has recently secured the Living Wage for local authority workers in Scotland, building on the work of my own city of Glasgow, and today it is a fighting force in the campaign against blacklisting and exploitation at work.

I am proud to be addressing a union whose best days aren't behind you but, clearly, ahead of you, led in Scotland by the great Harry Donaldson, a man with considerable influence who commands real respect throughout Scotland. (*Cheers and applause*) He is a great friend and campaigner, who I pay tribute to today.

Friends, let me thank you at the very beginning for your support in the campaign to keep the people of the United Kingdom together. You will know that just a few days ago President Obama talked about maintaining the unity of the United Kingdom. Congress, it seems that where Harry Donaldson and Paul Kenny go, President Obama follows. I hope on a few other things, too. This Union and the people of Scotland understand what is at stake in September, because know that this is a vote like no other. Our decision is irreversible, and we are making it not just for ourselves but for our children, our grandchildren and for generations to come. One hundred days from now people across Scotland will make a decision about our future. It is a decision that will affect the lives of everyone who lives and works in Scotland. The consequences will have a profound effect upon the whole of Britain. We have lived together and worked together for over 300 years. We have fought together under the same flag and for the same cause, as we were reminded only last Friday on the anniversary of D-Day. As a labour Movement we have struggled together against abuses of workers and fought to improve the rights of everyone who works in this country, regardless of whether you are English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish. You all have a stake and it is right that you have a voice guided by your membership in Scotland.

But the debate we are having is not one about whether Scotland could be an independent country. It is about whether we should be an independent country. That is the choice that Scots will make on 18th September. This, friends, is a decision that we have to make with our eyes wide open, one that has to be made with all the facts on the table. You will remember that during the banking crisis it was said that the failure of the banks was because of a collective failure of oversight, that no one asked the right questions, and when we make the decisions without the facts, when we don't ask the right questions, it is too often the people we represent, working class people, who pay the heaviest price. If people today look at their lives and ask questions about who would help, struggling with the cost of living, young people in insecure employment, worrying about housing, health and their future, they increasingly know that separation is not the answer, because their interests do not lie in playing one group against another, one nation against another. They do not want to see our economic future based on a race to the bottom.

Look at the facts. Alex Salmond wants to cut corporation tax, but he won't increase taxes for those most well off. He won't tax bankers' bonuses to help young people back to work, and he won't stand up to the energy companies to help hard-pressed folk. No wonder Brian Souter and Willy Walsh support a "Yes" vote, because the ex-MP believes Scotland has to cut taxes to compete. The logic of their position is that Scotland would have to compete with England and Wales, turning our biggest partners into competitors and opening up a real risk of a downward spiral in wages, rights and conditions. Instead, people across Scotland know that their best future lies in partnership that allows us to secure and raise common rights for all, as we have in the past. Employment protection, the welfare state, the National Health Service, the National Minimum Wage have all been secured by the strength of our common endeavour for every man, woman and child in our country. It did not matter that you English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish. It's been common rights for all. Those rights were not won easily but delivered by the struggle of the labour Movement, and that, friends, is what we are putting at risk.

Alex Salmond says that he wants more power for Scotland, but he proposes a currency union that would mean the interest rates that Scots pay would be set by the Bank of England, a foreign bank over which we would have no control. Friends, don't let anyone tell you that independence is a progressive choice, and don't let anyone tell you that the SNP can create some kind of progressive beacon, because this is a party of Government that just last month rejected the Living Wage for Scottish workers, that have cut 40,000 jobs from the public sector in Scotland, cut £1 billion from the anti-poverty programme and, because of their choices, 140,000 of our young people have lost out on a college place. So how can that be a progressive choice for the people of Scotland? How can it be when it reduces political control over economic decision-making? How can it be when it has stripped the ideology out of politics, because all

that matters is being Scottish? How can it be when the most important thing that matters is nationality, not the economic interests you represent?

Congress, let me be clear with you, I seriously oppose David Cameron, not because he is English but because he is a Tory. (*Applause*) The choice that faces the people of Scotland is clearer now than ever before. If you are tired of an economy that seems to work for the few at the top but not for the vast majority of ordinary people, the answer is not separation. It is to say “No, thanks” in September and then say “Yes” to a Labour Government next May. Labour under Ed Miliband is not satisfied with the status quo, because we will take on the vested interests. We will deliver an end to exploitative zero-hour contracts, an increase in the Minimum Wage and an energy-price freeze. People in Scotland do not need independence for this. They need a Labour Government, because what Scots want are jobs for our young people, funded by bankers’ bonuses, and a 50 pence tax rate for those earning £150,000 or more, because we believe that those with the deepest pockets should pay their fair share when times are tough. Congress, that is the real change that Scots want, not the empty promises of the SNP or the failed ideas of the Tories.

The vote on 18th September is not a test of patriotism or who loves Scotland the most. For me the patriotic choice is to vote against separation and to build a stronger Scottish Parliament for the future. With Labour, we will have a Scottish Parliament with more power over the levers of taxation, with powers over welfare, which means that we will never again inflict a bedroom tax on tenants in Scotland and more powers to develop our economy and get people back to work. Scotland can have the best of both worlds, a stronger Scottish Parliament backed up by the strength and security of the United Kingdom, protecting our people in good times and bad.

The best example of that is the story of your own Cathy Murphy, a member of the GMB on your own Executive. Hello, Cathy, if you are here. When Cathy fell ill at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, she was rushed to Broadgreen Hospital. The consultant here saved her life, and when she needed long-term care she carried on receiving that in that Liverpool hospital. There were no questions asked, no bureaucracy and no cost, because that was her entitlement as a British citizen. We can still have our own NHS in Scotland, but the Union between our countries means that when people are in need, our NHS does not look to borders within Britain and helps not only people like Cathy but thousands of others who benefit from transplant and transfusions on a daily basis. That is why I believe Scotland should remain part of the UK. That is my argument. (*Applause*) That is my argument for being a key part of the family of nations that is Britain, based on Labour values of solidarity and equality.

Like the majority of people across Scotland, I believe in sharing our resources across the United Kingdom to make sure it goes to those who need it most, that working people in Glasgow share a common cause with working people in Liverpool, as to people from Edinburgh to Exeter, from Cardiff to Keith, across the nations of the United Kingdom. Working people have got together in trade unions and political alliances to further our interests. We have achieved great things in the past and we will do so again. Keir Hardie set up the Scottish Labour Party but he went on to set up the British Labour Party, too, because he knew that working people had to show solidarity one to the other. Our forebears wanted to abolish the Scottish Poor Law and replace it with a British welfare state to establish standards across Britain, that no one, anywhere in Britain, should fall below. Of course, Mary Macarthur, one of the great inspirations of your trade union, from Ayrshire in Scotland, helped to establish the National Federation of Women Workers for women across the United Kingdom, all based on those enduring values of the labour Movement, working for what we have in common with each other, not what divides us from one another, separating ourselves from poverty and injustice, not separating one from the other, a nation against nation.

Congress, it is because of all of this, all that we have at stake in this referendum, that I praise the leadership shown by the GMB. Along with Community, ASLEF, the CWU, USDAW and the NUM, you have spoken out about why separation is not good for your members. You have shown the type of leadership that trade unions should and need to show. In the great struggles of our time, the trade union Movement has always been at the forefront, arguing your case and standing up for your members and making sure that you provide the leadership that people look for. That is what you have always done and you have won great victories along the way.

Now, as we stand on the verge of one of the most significant political decisions of our time, a decision that is a clear choice between progressive values and nationalist values, it is time for all of us who believe that separation threatens the best interests of our cause and of working people to speak out. Do not take the outcome of this vote for granted. There can be no complacency because this referendum will be won by those who play their part. It won't be won on the pages of the newspapers, in research reports or even at conferences. It will be won by the people who get out there and make the arguments, who inform the debate and make their voices clear. We are now in the closing stages of this campaign and everyone who believes in a "No" vote needs to stand up and be counted. I say to people who are thinking about speaking out, "Do not look back 101 days from now and wish that you had spoken out. Do not be cowed or intimidated and do not find yourself on the sidelines of history." Others need to follow the leadership and the lead of the GMB. You have said, clearly, why you and many of your trade union colleagues support a "No" vote on September 18th. It is because you know what generations before you knew, that we are stronger united and weaker apart, and that the best interests of working people are not served by erecting new borders but working in solidarity, one with each other. Congress, this year we will fight on labour values and use our power together to fight for a better and a fair future. We will show again that the best interests of working people are best served when we stand united, because we, in the Labour Party, remember what the trade unions have always taught us: united we stand and divided we fall.

I thank the GMB for standing with us in this great moment in Scottish history. Thank you, Comrades.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Let us present you with a bottle of GMB Whisky made in Scotland to take home, and a copy of the GMB history book. *(Presentation made amidst applause)*

Colleagues, I will now call Motion 155, to be moved by GMB Scotland, and then I will take Motion 160.

**POLITICAL: DEMOCRACY & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM
SUPPORT FOR THE 'NO' CAMPAIGN IN SCOTLAND'S REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT FURTHER UK PRIVATISATION OF THE NHS AND PUBLIC SERVICES
MOTION 155**

**155. SUPPORT FOR THE 'NO' CAMPAIGN IN SCOTLAND'S REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT FURTHER UK PRIVATISATION OF THE NHS AND PUBLIC SERVICES**

This Conference supports the NO campaign to prevent Scotland leaving the UK as a matter of urgency for the following reasons:

- the growing divide between the England and Scotland in terms of NHS and Public Service policy differences has to be stopped and reversed as soon as possible.
- these differences are being used by both the SNP and the Tories in Westminster to create resentment and reduce goodwill within the UK nations.

-our resilience as a strong UK is being undermined in order to distract us from what really matters, hope for better education, better health, more quality jobs for those who can work and support, care and dignity for those who cannot provide for themselves

- we are distracted even more by a media that trumps up issues and dramas which in the light of day really have little merit in terms of what really matters in the lives of ordinary people.

- the need to stop the real divide in the UK, the growing inequality between the haves and have nots has never been greater.

As one nation within a strong UK, we have a greater chance of working towards the common good by means of democratic change.

SCOTTISH PRIMARY CARE NURSING BRANCH
GMB Scotland

(Carried)

SIS. A. DEAN (GMB Scotland): Congress, I move Motion 155: Support for the ‘No’ campaign in the Scottish Referendum to prevent further UK privatisation of the NHS and public services.

President, Congress, Comrades, this year is the most important year in Scotland’s political history for three centuries. In 2013 Congress granted GMB Scotland the privilege to make its own decision as to whether to support Scottish independence or elect to remain part of the UK. Congress, having undertaken an extensive round-Scotland consultation exercise with members, we felt it would be impossible to say anything other than a resounding ‘No’. This was based on the old trade union principle that an injury to one is an injury to all. Not enough members were sufficiently convinced to agree to supporting independence and certainly more than enough people were strongly opposed, undecided or unconvinced either way.

Comrades we need all the help we can get to persuade those in the undecided groups to come round to voting ‘No’. Without Scotland in the UK all our lives will be poorer, not just the people of Scotland. You will be delighted to hear that I do not have time to go into the economic arguments as the details would have you sleeping until next week. You will just have to take it on trust that this is due to various factors, such as less than one in five of big businesses in Scotland are Scottish owned; Scotland’s biggest business partner is England, by a long chalk, and what happened in 2008 to the biggest Scottish bank, the RBS, was a warning to us all, never mind in Scotland. That is before we even go into the details of the defence and shipbuilding industries. What we are saying to GMB UK, nay, appealing to you, is a quid pro quo. Frankly, we are appalled at the current position we are faced with politically if Scotland decides to go it alone. When faced with the assault on public services generally, but specifically in terms of the NHS, you are in deep trouble. I adjusted the language to take account of Harry Donaldson being in the audience. There needs to be much more visibility of dissent, outright opposition and anger. If it was happening in my backyard, I would be camping out on every doorstep of every hospital and every health board in England. This growing divide between NHS Scotland and NHS UK has to be stopped in its tracks and reversed asap.

It is shocking to hear of the gradual slide towards privatisation described in step-by-step manoeuvres in the medical and broadsheet press. What are we all doing about this? We need to rediscover our anger. Scotland is far from unscathed in the privatisation agenda, but we do not have wholesale franchising and selling of the NHS family silver that is happening down *here*. These differences are, however, being used overtly by the SNP and covertly by the Tories for differing reasons, to create resentment and reduce the goodwill between the UK nations and regions. All of us in this room know only too well that together our resilience is strong, but the current tensions in Scotland are a distraction from what really matters. All the

issues that we are bringing together this week are hopes for better education, health, better jobs for those who can work and real support, care and dignity for those who cannot provide it for themselves. We must not allow our resolve to be diminished by the media trumping up issues and dramas which mean nothing in the true light of day. We need to get what really matters back on to the front pages and stop the real divide in the UK – the growing inequality between rich and poor, which has never been greater. In an independent Scotland, the SNP will continue to sanitise the truth and try to get away with pulling even more wool over our eyes, something which they have been caught doing more than a few times in the past seven years, despite what the socialists within the “Yes” camp think, Scotland will find itself hired out to the multinationals which, as we know only too well, do not pay their due taxes and certainly do not pay anything like a Living Wage.

THE PRESIDENT: Time’s up.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: No, let her go on.

THE PRESIDENT: All right. Finish.

SIS. DEAN: This is really important. Thank you for letting me finish. By losing the hard core of Scottish Labour MPs, you will never get working people’s priority on the agenda again, or not until hell freezes over first. With an independent Scotland, what remains of the UK will dissolve into a capitalist nightmare for you all. Congress, we need to stick together. We must fight against this needless independence campaign and when, with a large enough majority in order to put the SNP finest back in their box for good. More importantly, perhaps, what we need to fight against is the privatisation of our NHS, keep it, surely, international within a united UK, and make sure that, as one nation within a strong UK, we have a much greater chance of working towards the common good by means of democratic change.

You will all know of someone who is entitled to vote in the Scottish Referendum. Get on the phone now and tell them what you think. Appeal to their sense of solidarity. Comrades, we must fight together. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*
Margaret, you are fantastic.

SIS. A. DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 155 – Support for the ‘No’ campaign. Congress, since the formation of the Scottish Government, the NHS and local government have been devolved. This has led to a divide between Scotland and the other nations within the United Kingdom. Some of these changes have been detrimental to members on both sides of the border. Ask yourself these questions: Do you really want a Tory Government for ever more? Do you really want to have to carry your passport to cross the border? Your answer to both of these questions should be ‘No’. In spite of what the media and the ‘Yes’ campaign are portraying, if Scotland was to become independent, the rest of the UK would never see a Labour government in power again. The Schengen Agreement would mean that you would have to carry your passport from one nation to another. Could we be back to the days where English sterling was worth more than Scottish, or the other way round, and that is if we get to keep the pound?

Congress, this is about being a national trade union. The views of the members most under threat need to be realised nationally and have a national backing. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Annette. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? Oh dear, I didn’t see you!

BRO. J. HILLS (GMB Scotland): I just want to let you know that I went to two SMP debating halls and asked them these questions: “If Scotland has independence, what will the currency be? How are you going to be able to afford the free prescription charges? How are you going to be able to afford to pay tuition fees?” The reply: “We don’t know. Wait till we get independence and we’ll find that out”. Question: “So if you get independence, you are not going to know what you are going to be doing then?” Reply: “Well, wait till we get independence.” Question: “Right, you also do realise that if Scotland has independence they will not have a currency. In two or three years if they go for a loan to the IMF, it will double the rate of interest that England pays because you do not have a reliable currency.” Reply: “We don’t know yet. Wait till we get independence.”

I urge all Scottish people to vote No in the forthcoming referendum. If we go independent, it is going to be a disaster. All my friends in Scotland and all my family are voting No. I urge all Scottish people to vote No. Let’s stay within the United Kingdom and be British. Thank you. (*Applause*)

POLITICAL: DEMOCRACY & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Anyone else? No? Could I ask for 160, Freedom of Information, London Region to move? You have been so patient down there.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION MOTION 160

160. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Congress notes that the Freedom of Information Act applies only to public bodies and agrees that its scope should be widened to include private companies who operate transport, power and water. The recent horrific stories of families without power over Christmas and rail routes closed for excessive times may well be prevented if these companies came under the scope of the Act.

BARKING & DAGENHAM LGO BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. B. DUFFIELD (London): The Freedom of Information Act entitles everyone to request information held by the public authority but what is the public authority? There is a list in the original schedule of the Act that covers a great range of the public sector bodies, from finance service bodies to museums. It covers bodies and services owned by the Crown and by the public authorities. It also covers bodies that have been designated as a public authority by the Secretary of State. This can be made if the Secretary of State thinks that the exercised functions are of a public nature or that they are provided under a contract with a public authority and services whose provisions are functions of the authorities. That seems fairly straightforward.

What more does the water industry do, or the power industry, or transport? They must exercise functions of a public nature. After all, we once owned them and you cannot get any more public than that, but if that was true there would be no point in this motion at a time when we worry about our water, there is either too much or too little. What is not covered? Water is a necessity, not a luxury. Have you ever tried to live without it? While we worry about increasing bills and fuel poverty, there is the power. You can avoid the power producers but without heating, lighting, and cooking, your life will be pretty basic. Then there are the transport and franchise scandals, and arguments over high-speed links are not covered. For a brief moment after 2005 we could use a similar law to the Freedom of Information Act called the Environment Information Regulations to get information on environment effects, and for a brief moment that did give us information on water companies, but in 2010 the route was closed off. I wonder why.

The utilities run our life whether we want them to or not. We cannot live without them. Surely, we deserve the right to look inside them. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brendan. Secunder.

BRO. M. PRESHAW (London): Freedom of information should be what it says. For too many years the power, rail, and water industries have had access to information about us, Joe Public. It is about time that these people could be fully looked into. No more hiding behind the lie of, “We are not public services.” We pay them for the services they supply and we are Joe Public. You tell me, can we look into it? I urge you to support the motion. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mick. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? Can I now put Motion 160 and 155 to the vote? All in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 160 was CARRIED.

Motion 155 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, Margaret will be leaving us in a little while. Margaret, can I say I am so thrilled to see you here at Congress and to say I am proud of my Union that we never sat on the fence. We came out shoulder to shoulder irrespective of our differences at times, which we all have. I wish you luck and, please, let the No campaign come out and say, “We want to stay with them bleeding English over there.” *(Applause)*

POLITICAL: EUROPEAN UNION

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, we will now move on to Item 6, which is Motion 167 by the London Region. Could I have the mover and supporter, please?

EU FOOD AID FUND MOTION 167

167. EU FOOD AID FUND

This Congress congratulates the efforts of Labour MEP’s who at the request of Britain’s Trussell Trust successfully co-proposed an EU Food Aid Fund of £2.5bn to help run food banks across Europe.

The Trussell Trust has provided through its network of food banks across the UK, emergency assistance for over 500,000 people since 2013 that are in financial crisis.

However, despite these efforts, this Tory led Coalition Government has only drawn £2.9m of the £22m allocated to Britain.

This Congress calls on GMB

- To spearhead a campaign to ensure this Government puts the needs of the most destitute and deprived in our society before its anti-European ideology and draws the full EU Food Aid Fund allocated to Britain.
- Ensures the Government talks with action groups such as the Trussell Trust to agree the best way in which to spend this fund.

ASDA BEDFORD DC BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. M. LANCASTER (London): This Congress welcomes the efforts made by our Labour MEPs who proposed and supported the setting up of the EU Food Aid Fund following on from the request of the Trussle Trust. The European Food Aid Fund is a pot made up of £2.5bn set up to help feed the most deprived people across the European Union: 592 MEPs overwhelmingly voted in favour of setting up this fund and was only opposed by 61 MEPs. This included all of our UK Tory MEPs. The request to set up the fund was made by the Trussle Trust, who since 2013 have helped feed and support over half a million people and despite the Coalition claims that our economy is growing, so does the number of families relying on food banks to survive day in, day out.

As the vicious waves of welfare reform bite harder and harder, it seems the Government has its head firmly in the sand and would rather blame the increasing need of food banks on the financial mismanagement of the needy. Only 3.5m euros have been drawn from the UK allocation of the fund so far. In contrast, this is the same amount drawn by the smallest European country, Malta, whilst countries like France are taking their fair share of the pot, withdrawing 247m euros from the fund. Whilst only drawing the bare minimum out of the fund, the Government have ignored the advice of charities and support groups delivering aid on the frontline on how best to distribute these funds, instead choosing to spend the funds on training and development schemes to get people back into employment that does not exist, not used to support the struggling food banks. This shows how out of touch they really are putting their anti-European ideology before the needs of the most deprived people in our society.

This motion calls on us all to campaign and ensure this Government of the rich listens to our Labour MEPs and charity groups alike and withdraws our full financial allocation of the fund and spends it where it is most needed, supporting the thousands of food banks run by volunteers up and down the country to ensure our children and our vulnerable do not go without food any more. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Secunder.

BRO. V. WEST (London): Congress, proud to second Motion 167, proud in the sense that I think this Union has a great tradition of helping not only our own members but the poor, the deprived, and the needy, in our communities right across the country but not so proud of the fact that in this country we have become reliant on food banks. More and more in this country we are becoming reliant on food banks. Those people at the bottom of the pile have to go cap in hand to beg, essentially to beg. I know that they have to go to their GP or they have to get a voucher, and there is some system of vetting for them, but essentially it takes us back to Victorian times when people were destitute and where people were relying on charity. It is a huge failure of the welfare state and this Tory Government that we are now reliant on food banks.

We have a role to play in working with organisations like the Trussle Trust, working with the churches, working with the wider community, to ensure that the poor, the needy, the desperate in our society, are not failed yet again. If the Tory Government fail them, then we need to stand with them and ensure that their lives are allowed to exist and their families are supported. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vaughan. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting this motion. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 167 was CARRIED.

SOCIAL POLICY: GENERAL

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Now I move on to item 7, which is Social Policy. Composite 15, Yorkshire to move, and Wales to second.

FOOD BANKS AND ECONOMIC POVERTY COMPOSITE MOTION 15

C15. Covering Motions:

- 168. ECONOMIC POVERTY (*Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region*)
- 169. FOOD BANKS (*Wales & South West Region*)

FOOD BANKS AND ECONOMIC POVERTY

This Conference recognises the significant spread of food banks across the country and thinks it is a national disgrace that in 2013, in this enlightened society, we have families relying on food banks.

These food banks are used by those on benefits as well as low paid workers, driven there as a result of Government austerity policies. These are, in the main, hardworking families where the causes are: hours have been cut, jobs have been lost, the impact of bedroom tax; loss of vital benefits, the rise in energy costs, to name but a few.

Basic economics show that if people have jobs where they are paid a living wage, they retain their dignity and have enough money to ensure that they no longer have to make a decision whether to keep warm & cook nourishing meals or buy food to feed their families.

This government has taken us back to the food queues of the 1930's. It is a savage attack on those on benefits, low paid, hardworking people who have had the basic right of being able to feed their family taken from them. This is Cameron's way of fixing Britain. We must stop the injustice of economic poverty. It must stop now.

We call upon the CEC to campaign to stop and ensure that all families and individual members of our society are lifted out of economic poverty, and for the GMB to work with the Labour Party MP's to repeal this draconian practice.

This Conference demands that a future Labour Government ensures that no one ever again suffers the indignity of having to use a food bank.

Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region to Move Wales & South West Region to Second

(Carried)

BRO. S. MARTIN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I am a first-time speaker and a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* It is a disgrace that in 2014 reliance on food banks triples. One cause is UK benefit failures which have fuelled food bank demand, according to reports in Wales. Food bank visits rose by 470% according to statistics in England. Cornwall has also reported food banks demand more than doubling and food banks are forced to ration food in Stoke and Staffordshire.

A real life story: A student reports the food bank was a lifesaver. The 21-year old college student had not eaten properly for weeks and could not afford gas to heat her flat when she came to a food bank in January 2014. After leaving state care she was determined to make something of her life and was funding herself through college working two evening jobs to make ends meet. She was made redundant from both within a month. As a 21-year old in full-time education with no children she did not qualify for

benefits. She sold everything she had and with nowhere else to turn for basic provisions she asked the local council for help. They referred her to a food bank. When she arrived she was ill, dehydrated, and in the first stages of malnutrition. The food bank was a lifesaver. She says she has no idea what she would have done without it. She was so impressed by the support she received that she began volunteering at the food bank.

The Government have created the reality of the 1930s food queues. The Coalition Government are responsible for the economic poverty. For example, benefit changes and forms are complicated affecting the most vulnerable in society who are least able to defend themselves, sending a clear message they are not wanted. The result of austerity policies is causing stress, depression, low self-esteem, lack of hope, highlighting the mental impact of austerity measures and media rhetoric about poverty. It is affecting all walks and strands of society. It has even reached the attention of the church. Anglican bishops wrote to the *Daily Mirror* slating David Cameron for creating a national crisis in which over 500,000 people visited UK food banks and it is expected to rise to over one million in 2015, not to mention the five million children affected, as highlighted in the equality presentation yesterday by Kamaljeet Jandu. Even the government's Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, states the numbers being referred to food banks have increased since last April's benefit changes and the introduction of benefit sanctions.

Finally, Congress, let's demand the future Labour government ensures no one has to suffer the indignity of having to use a food bank. When do we do it? Start campaigning from now for the general election in May 2015. Labour can do it. Let's believe that. I move Composite 15. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sinclair. Wales to second.

BRO. J. SUTTON (GMB Wales and South West): Vice President, Congress, we face a sobering fact that hunger and poverty in this country is becoming increasingly prevalent. Food bank use is up by a staggering 33% over the past couple of years and accessed by a growing number of employed Britons who are not paid enough to sustain themselves and their families. In many areas of Britain there are scores of children and adults, and entire families, who skip meals. The media makes many assumptions about those who use food banks but the harsh truth is that the majority are hard working individuals who are simply struggling to survive on what they earn.

How can this happen in 2014? It is the tragic face of a deeply divided country where the UK's five richest families are now worth more than the entire bottom 20% of the population. The scandal of UK poverty goes on and unless radical action is taken then hunger will persist for a long time to come. There are so many for whom the Government austerity policies are simply not working, victims seeking refuge and going hungry just a stone's throw away from Cameron's and Osborne's front door, genuine people who have not caused the financial crisis but are being made to pay for it big time. Predictably, government-speak tells us that food banks are causing people to use them and unable to live on a budget and wasting their money on consumer luxuries. The rhetoric completely and conveniently distracts attention away from the very real stories of hardship and hunger which afflict families in modern-day Britain.

That is why this motion requires a future Labour government to end the shameful scandal of poverty. There are positive measure that can be taken, including raising the minimum wage to a living one, tackling food and energy prices, and sorting out the chaos of the welfare reform. The poor should not have to rely upon other organisations raising funds to stop them going hungry. Food bank providers do sterling work but should not be expected to assume the responsibility of failed economic policies. The solution must lie in reversing these policies, reigniting the economy, and putting more money into the pockets of ordinary working people instead of the rich and powerful. The food banks must not become a

way of life for hundreds of thousands of working people. They deserve much better than this. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jeff. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting Composite 15. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Composite 15 was CARRIED.

SOCIAL POLICY: WELFARE RIGHTS & SERVICES

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We are now moving to Social Policy: Welfare Rights & Services. Could I ask the movers and seconders of Motion 255, Yorkshire Region, 256, London Region, 257, Wales & South West Region, and 259, London Region to come to the front, please?

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS MOTION 255

255. SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

This Conference notes:

1. In Britain 20.3 million families receive some kind of benefit (64% of all families), about 8.7 million of them pensioners. For 9.6 million families, benefits make up more than half of their income (30% of all families), around 5.3 million of them pensioners.
2. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's study (December 2013) could not find any families where three generations had never worked, contrary to the government's propaganda. If they exist, they account for a minuscule fraction of workless people. Under 1% of workless households might have two generations who have never worked – about 15,000 households in the UK. The long-term worklessness of parents was a result of complex problems (particularly related to ill-health) associated with living in long-term and deep poverty. In an already tight labour market, multiple problems combined to place people at the back of a long queue for jobs.
3. For 2011-12 it is estimated that 0.8%, or £1.2bn, of total benefit expenditure was overpaid as a result of fraud. This is far lower than the figures widely believed by the public. A TUC poll recently revealed that people believe 27% of the welfare budget is claimed fraudulently.
4. More than 80% of claimants find work within six months. For disability benefits, there are more long-term claimants.
5. 50% of cuts fall into two areas. Benefits (to be cut by 20%) most of which is for disabled people and people in poverty. Local Government (to be cut by over 40%) most of which is for social care (which will be cut by 33%)
6. People in poverty (1 in 5 of us) bear 39% of all cuts.
7. Disabled people (1 in 13 of us) bear 29% of all cuts
8. People with severe disabilities (1 in 50 of us) bear 15% of all cuts.
9. Disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty as other citizens, with roughly a third of disabled people living in poverty at some point in their lives.

This Conference believes:

10. That the government and its allies in the right wing press (such as the Sun and Daily Mail) are scapegoating people claiming benefits. This is an ideologically driven assault using austerity and the deficit as a smoke screen to dismantle state provision of welfare.
11. Any increase in worklessness is the result of high adult unemployment because of a lack of decent jobs.
12. The cuts are not fair. They have been targeted against the very people a decent society would protect. The protection of the sick, disabled and most vulnerable is fundamental to a decent civilized society.

This Conference Resolves;

13. To campaign against the government's current methods of assessing disability as being unfair and failing to properly assess a person's impairment or their needs.
14. To call for a halt to the current program of cuts.
15. To call for the repeal of the Welfare Reform Act.
16. To call for an independent assessment of the cumulative impact of the cuts on disabled people and other vulnerable groups.
17. To call for the development of a fairer welfare system built on a recognition of the equal worth of all human beings and the guarantee of human rights for all.

LEEDS GENERAL BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): When I worked in the coal industry, and you probably knew I would sneak coal in somehow, when I worked at the pit what was perhaps rather unkindly called the lazy, the sick, and the lame, employees no longer able to carry out their original more physically demanding jobs often underground, would be found alternative jobs, stores, control room, after all, a pit is or was a community and looked after its own. A humane society also looks after its own. My last job before retirement was to organise facilities for disabled children at schools. It is very satisfying to know you have helped improve the lives of these children so they could benefit from and enjoy their education but, hang on, disabled children grow up into disabled adults. Surely, there is no room for these in David Cameron's brave new world. They are not the only losers in our society.

When my late actor husband was alive he was no Lawrence Olivier so he was usually unemployed and we were trying to survive on benefits. After his death I struggled to support my four children on a low income so I know what it is like to live in poverty and now, of course, I am an old-aged pensioner keeping my fingers crossed that they do not scrap my free bus pass or get rid of my winter fuel allowance. Deprivation affects people. Recent research has indicated that even by the age of nine disadvantaged children's chromosomes have been affected by their deprived lifestyle but it is not just the physical and health impact of deprivation, there are mental and emotional implications too, the feeling of social disadvantage, second-class citizens, struggling to provide the essentials, never mind luxuries, always having to scrimp, never having enough to save, that attitude can remain even after people's financial situations have improved.

There is such a gulf between the "have too muchers" and the "have not enoughs". Decisions are taken by the wealthy at the top on what those at the bottom will receive. Decisions are taken by those who have never been there, they have absolutely no comprehension of what that life, that struggle is like. The philanthropists of Victorian Britain had more understanding; they treated the poor with more dignity than the politicians who ran our theoretically enlightened 21st century society. We need to stop portraying those on benefits as scroungers. They need understanding and help, not abuse. They need solutions and not cuts. We are a great campaigning union. We have a record of which we can be justly proud. Let us spearhead the campaign to create a world where all members of our society are treated with understanding and respect. As for the pit communities, by the end of next year, unless there is a miracle, Kellingley and Thoresby will close, and that will leave just one deep mine left in the UK, and thousands more ex-miners claiming benefits.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pam. Secunder of 255? Formally? Thank you.

Motion 255 was formally seconded.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The mover of 256, London Region.

BUDGET OUTRAGE MOTION 256

256. BUDGET OUTRAGE

This Congress agrees that the proposal by George Osborne the Tory Chancellor to take another £12.5bn from the welfare budget is outrageous and shows the Tories in their true anti-working class colours.

This clearly demonstrates why they need to be defeated in the 2015 election.

BARKING BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. B. DUFFIELD (London): President, Congress, Britain 2014, the bedroom tax, housing benefit caps, people forced to move out of lifelong homes to other areas, and an orchestrated press attacking the benefit scroungers, the unemployed, the disabled, and the elderly openly discriminated against, and tax cuts for the rich. Congress, welcome to Cameron's and Osborne's Britain 2014, an ideological age ruled by dogma and self-interest, a divisive age pitting those not on benefits against those who depend on them. There used to be a Tory claim that Labour preaches the policies of envy because they wanted to tax the haves for the benefit of the have-nots. The Tories, with the abundant aid of their lackey press spiel, are telling the haves that they are making their lot better by cutting benefits to the have-nots, or as *The Sun* says, the scroungers.

Colleagues, state welfare is not just a hand-out, it is the means by which the disadvantaged, the disabled, the misunderstood of the country can live with dignity – dignity, colleagues – not luxury but the means to survive on. Colleagues, there are cases of welfare benefit abuse and this Union has never been a champion of radical abuse of the welfare system. In the main, welfare claims abuse is minimal, certainly far less than widespread tax avoidance.

Congress, this is Britain 2014. What about Britain 2015? Osborne has announced a further package of cuts worth £25bn for next year, £12.5bn to be cut from the welfare budget. Congress, that is scandalous. No housing benefit for under-25s. Where are they going to live? A young family in London on the minimum wage cannot afford the extortionate rents charged by the robber landlords and unless they receive housing benefits they will be homeless. In 2015, there will be no social housing for those earning £60,000 a year. The Tories have no problem attacking the working class but now it appears they want the middle-class as well. Earn £60,000 and you cannot have a council house and you cannot get family allowance. That is conspicuous but it is absent from *The Sun* front page.

Congress, the proposals for next year are outrageous and have been condemned by Nick Clegg. Well, Congress, if Nick Clegg feels that strongly about them, he should do the decent thing, as he has done since 2010, and resign from the Coalition and force a general election now to get these millionaire bastards out. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brendan.

SIS. C. LEE (London): President, Congress, along with my colleague I absolutely condemn the announcement by George Osborne that many more millions are going to be cut from the welfare budget.

This is more proof that of the vindictive nature of this evil government preying on the poor and vulnerable whilst looking after their rich friends. A report by Oxfam tells us that 1.75 million of the poorest families have seen an absolute cut in income over the past three years. We have seen the rise in the number of food banks. We have seen an increase in rent arrears and an increase in heating costs, and families in despair, all down to the Tory dogma about the welfare state. Jobs seekers and the elderly, and the disabled, will be the people who suffer most from these new cuts but, Congress, cuts are not necessarily the best method of balancing the books. Why not restore the 50 pence tax rate? Why not make landlords charge fair rents and avoid a lot of the need for housing benefit? Why not stop tax avoidance? Why not create jobs, well paying jobs, all over the country? By implementing these options, the economy will get better and a feel good factor will be created. That will be an improvement on the despair factor so evident around the country. Congress, I am happy to second this motion and I ask you to support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The mover of 257.

UNIVERSAL BENEFITS AND MEANS TESTING MOTION 257

257. UNIVERSAL BENEFITS AND MEANS TESTING

This Conference - at a time of austerity this government would have us believe that the sixth biggest economy in the world cannot any longer afford to pay universal benefits.

We believe this to be wrong and whilst some current universal benefits could be abolished as part of the introduction of a real living wage we are of the view that benefits such as child benefit could and should continue to be paid to all parents who contribute to the tax system in the UK, we therefore call upon the next Labour Government to repeal cuts to benefits that have had a negative impact upon families.

PONTYPRIDD GENERAL BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. HUNT (GMB Wales & South West): President, Congress, in 1942 William Beveridge presented his report to Parliament. His cross-party report outlined a number of principles which were necessary to banish poverty and want from Britain. The system of universal benefit was to be implemented at Wallsend and would provide a coherent government policy and insurance against the biggest challenge of the time, want. President, it is ironic that 70 years on Britain faces a similar challenge to our forefathers and mothers. Poverty is on the rise with the gap between rich and poor at its widest ever. Many people who now have to claim benefit are working people who have to apply for benefits to make ends meet. It cannot be right that in the 21st century the Tories and LibDem partners are using public money to authorise poverty pay paid by unscrupulous employers.

Congress, in 1945 the first ever majority Labour government under the shadow of the end of the Second World War and massive debt decided they would do something about poverty, ill health, unemployment, etc. under our very own Nye Bevan introduced the NHS and built council houses on a massive scale that took people off the dole and put them to work while at the same time provided affordable council houses for them to live in.

President, compare and contrast this with what the Coalition are doing now with about a third of the debt to deal with. They are privatising the NHS in England, made school academies, abolished working family tax credits, and slashed benefits for the disabled. Congress, this is not done out of necessity, out of

a need to balance the books, this is an ideological attack on the working people of Britain who contribute to the Exchequer through their tax and National Insurance contributions.

Congress, universal benefit was introduced as a fair system that would be used to ensure that everyone benefits from their endeavours. That system has served this country well and should be preserved unlike the bonuses to bankers and the tax cuts for the rich. Congress, Nye Bevan once said that the NHS would last for as long as people were prepared to fight for it. The Union must continue the fight for our vital public services and for the universal benefit that provides the safety net for many people in this country. Congress, we have a duty to look out for our brothers and sisters. Let's make a stand now by voting in favour of this motion. I move . (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Secunder.

BRO. M. CAMERON (GMB Wales and South West): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, as my colleague, Paul, has said universal benefits were designed to support people who require and need additional help but it is a drain on the system and thousands of pounds a year are spent on wasteful administration. Universal credit is a means tested benefit for people of working age. It will replace six million benefits for one single benefit in England, Wales, and Scotland. The change will continue to take place until 2017. Eventually, universal credit will affect eight million households and 19 million people so we will all know someone who will be affected by these changes. If you or your household currently get help through housing benefit, working tax credit, or childcare credit, the move to universal credit will affect you.

Over 900,000 people in work currently get help with housing costs through housing benefit and that figure is rapidly rising. Over four million people get help through working tax credit and childcare credit. Colleagues, the pay they get from their employers is too low and is clearly recognised as not enough to live on. The Government says that over three million people will be better off and 2.8 million people worse off on universal credit. However, this claim fails to take into account the fact that many of those people have already had help with living costs beforehand. The TUC and the Child Poverty Action Group have recently demonstrated that nine out of ten families will gain nothing from its introduction.

Colleagues, it is clearly the biggest cause of concern for those who will need help from universal credit, together with low wages and exploitation of zero-hours contracts, and part-time working. If a real living wage was introduced and replaced the minimum wage, I have no doubt this would help with the removal of some of these credits. I second the motion. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. London Region to move 259.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS MOTION 259

259. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS

This Congress recognises the contribution that committed and professional REFUGE workers make to their organisation, the women and children they serve and towards making our society a better place to live in.

Local Authority cutbacks have meant that organisations such as REFUGE are being forced to compete for service contracts in an environment that demands "more for less" as a return rather than a "best quality" social return that would allow REFUGE to commit more time to education, prevention, early intervention programmes and the long-term support of women and children affected by domestic violence.

Established and effective services are being discontinued or pushed into the voluntary sector when funding has been cut (LBH = £175,000 cut in funding since 2011) and services outsourced to other generalist providers, at a time when demand for REFUGE's services continues to rise.

Austerity cutbacks in funding for victims of domestic violence forced to leave their homes is having serious implications for their wellbeing – and that of their children – when they attempt to resettle from refuges.

Cutbacks in housing benefit have had a direct impact on the opportunities for domestic violence survivors to be rehoused, with women having to move far away from their local area and support networks in order to find private landlords who are willing to take on tenants funded by Housing Benefit. There is no additional public funding available to support these women in these circumstances.

Congress calls for the ring fencing of monies and dedicated funding within local authorities budgets to be used specifically to tackle the issue and consequence of domestic violence and to support the continuing funding of established specialist organisations such as REFUGE in providing services to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

HOUNSLOW BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. E. HUGHES (London): Good morning, President, comrades. First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* I am here this morning to talk about the threat to funding of essential domestic violence services in local authorities and of the impact of Eric Pickles Localisation Bill on the resettlement of domestic violence survivors. The Tory Government is keen to keep telling us, the working class and workers, that this is a time of austerity. The effect of Tory austerity economics are being keenly felt by some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, disabled people, the poor, the working poor, and victims of domestic violence.

I am a Labour councillor in the London Borough of Hounslow and since 2011 Refuge, our professional services provider, has seen a cut across all the services it provides for our residents to the tune of about £175,000, unavoidable cuts in the current austerity climate. So, I would like you all this morning to picture this. It is a true case. You have had to leave your home with your three kids at night, with the police, following a nasty assault by your partner. You go to hospital. Your kids are split up and spend the next five nights with foster carers. You are allocated a place at a refuge safe house and you are reunited with your kids. You have only got the clothes you left in. You go back to your house with the police to get some essentials but the house has been trashed. You have two bin bags of clothes. You get a support worker. You start counselling and you start to get your life together. Your kids enrol in a new local school and things start to settle down, and you want to leave the hostel and get a new place to start living your life again. Now the problems start. You are on full benefit but there are no landlords local to your kids' school who will take DSS tenants. Your case worker is trying to get you housed by the council but the council are dragging their feet and telling you nothing is available. You are still in the hostel 16 weeks later and there are other women who want that hostel place and who need it.

This scenario is very much one woman's experience but the outcome is typical. Over the years we have supported professional organisations that provide specific and specialist services in our communities. Austerity in funding has meant real cash cuts and the knock-on effect has meant there has been a terrible effect on case loads for domestic violence, breadth of support, and positive outcomes. In Hounslow we are now asking Refuge, the police, and other agencies, to encompass FGM in their work. As yet there has been no talk of extra funding. We also do not want to get into a situation where we identify further

groups of women and children with this issue for which there is no statutory responsibility and therefore no protected funding.

In summary, Congress, we call for a full assessment of the true cost of providing a full and professional service to assist the victims of domestic violence. We call for this funding to be ring-fenced to prevent other use of these monies. Refuge workers provide a professional and measurably effective service in our local communities and deserve to be valued, recognised, and supported for this work. Congress, I urge adoption of this motion as policy so that our great Union can educate and influence our GMB councillors, MPs, and MEPs, to do the right thing to protect domestic violence services. Please support. I thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. While I am calling the seconder I ask the movers of 260, Midland, 262, GMB Scotland, 263, Southern Region, and 264 Yorkshire Region, to come to the front, please.

SIS. L. MANN (London): First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, each year around half a million incidents of domestic violence are reported in the UK and on average two women per week are killed by their current or former partner. I think you will agree these are shocking statistics. It is sad to see, then, that Refuge, an organisation that provides a lifeline to women who have been the subject of domestic violence, should be at risk of having its funding reduced or ended in some areas of the UK due to the cuts in local authority funding. Some refuges and centres have already had to close their doors to women and their children, or if they have not they are unable to take new cases. This is yet another case of how spending cuts are disproportionately impacting on women.

The contribution that Refuge makes to the lives of women and children, communities, and wider society, cannot be underestimated, it offers a range of services which give women and children access to professional support whatever their situation. On any given day over 2,000 women and children are supported, whether it be via the helpline, outreach service, or being given a place of refuge. Refuge's aim is to empower women and children to rebuild their lives so they can engage once more in their communities and society. Therefore, it is so important that something is done to save Refuge and similar organisations before they are lost all together and vulnerable women and children left with nowhere to turn for protection. I urge you to support this motion. Congress, I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lynsey. Can I now call the movers of 260, Midland and East Coast Region?

WHO BENEFITS MOTION 260

260. WHO BENEFITS

This Conference notes the good work done by the five charities that help create the campaign website whobenefits.org.uk

This website supports the idea that benefits are acceptable and just in a decent caring society.

This Conference calls on the CEC to support this good work and join them on their campaign to tell people's real life stories of benefits.

GMB MID LINGS BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. S. HOARE (Midland & East Coast): First time speaker and delegate. (*Applause*) Who benefits is a good question to ask in relation to the Welfare Reform Act of 2012. This Act includes the implementation of the extremely unpopular bedroom tax. It is also responsible for the majority of negative media reporting of people on benefits. This Congress notes the good work done by the five charities that help create the campaign website, whobenefits.org.uk. These charities are The Children's Society, who work with disadvantaged children; Crisis, who work with single homeless people; Gingerbread, who support single-parent families; Macmillan Cancer Support, who work to improve the lives of people with cancer; and MIND, a leading mental health charity.

This website supports the idea that benefits are acceptable and just in a decent caring society. Their aim is simple. They want to collect 2,500 real life stories of people's experiences when they have been supported by benefits at some point in their lives. So far, they have collected in excess of 1,750 stories. As their website whobenefits.org.uk says: "All too often people who have been helped by benefits get ignored, misrepresented, or at worst blamed for their situation. By using people's real life stories we hope to change that."

We all benefit when support is there for those who need it. A great many GMB members' families have needed support from benefits at some point through no fault of their own, be it redundancy or ill health. This Congress calls on the CEC to support this good work and join them on their campaign to tell people's real life stories on benefits. After all, when you ask the questions, *Who benefits*, we all do. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Susan. Seconder.

BRO. D. JOBSON (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, whilst supporting this campaign group we can utilise the internet to help get the message out there that more and more working people are also having to receive benefits just to make ends meet, although for some the ends do not even get close. We can help with putting to the public stories of working families who are affected by low pay, not enough hours of work each week, and who need to receive housing benefit so they can at least keep a roof over their heads, which some in our society would rather not have the masses made aware of.

For many people benefits are a real good news story which should be shared to remind people why the welfare system was set up in the first place, to lend a hand to those who truly need it. But for a range of people their needs for benefits is a symptom of failures in society that could be fixed, if the will and desire were there to do so. There are too many untold stories, real stories, true stories, stories that are still being written as I speak here today, stories which should not even be happening. Colleagues, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. 262, GMB Scotland.

UNEMPLOYMENT MOTION 262

262. UNEMPLOYMENT

This Conference to ask why the employment of the public who are unfortunate to be unemployed are considered for a post that is unsuitable for them.

If they refuse their money is sanctioned.

This Government has been for years tearing away at the rights of the people who are unfortunate to be unemployed.

(Carried)

BRO. D. STEWART (GMB Scotland): First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* Comrades, this Congress is asking why people who are unemployed are being asked to apply for jobs that are unsuitable, inappropriate for their skills, outwith their scope of experience or education, and in fact may increase the effects of disabilities, ongoing mental health problems, family care issues, too far away to afford transport costs, and make no economic sense whatsoever. These unfortunate casualties of the desperate policies made up on the back of Tory fag packets find that their benefits are at serious risk if they do not comply with the demands made of them by these rogue policies. The overworked and underpaid staff in the job centres are under pressure from unrealistic targets driven by the promise of the cutthroat outsourced ATOS bosses who are holding this country to ransom.

This is money that should be used to invest in honest public services, and to provide better support for the so-called unemployed people who require support, the disabled, who in other times would have been considered eligible for the state pension, the vulnerable and those who through no fault of their own have become economic casualties, fallen through the net of bankers' bonuses, the fat cat tax evaders, and the mortgage crash of 2008. Congress, this cannot go on and indeed these overgrown public schoolboys are going to get exactly, perhaps not exactly, what they deserve, more's the pity, but we will see them off the premises in less than 11 months from now. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Secunder.

BRO. A. McAUGHTRIE (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, this Tory-led Coalition Government is blackmailing unemployed people into making hopeless job applications. Those with little or no skills are being forced to apply for at least 10/20 jobs per week and they are unlikely to be taken on by unsympathetic employers anyway. This bullying tactic is aimed at trying to win back the middle-class voters and their support which the Government has lost. The idea of forcing people into jobs which are unsuitable is simply a method used by this Coalition to crudely reduce the unemployment figures, so is it good practice to force a qualified plumber to become a ballet instructor, or is it for a trained nurse to become a window cleaner. The truth is no real full-time jobs are available for people to move into. That is the reason the zero-hours contracts are becoming more and more popular. It is not only that the under-skilled and untrained are at the mercy of this embarrassing policy, take the case of the men and women in their late 50s and early 60s, they are also unlikely to find work. Employers are wary of taking on people that have been unemployed for some time and even more if they have been out of work for five years or more, not to mention those with criminal records trying to make a new start in life, most employers will not even give these members of society a second glance, never mind a job. Congress, the crazy idea of making unemployed people report to a job centre daily will only increase the cost of travel for many of them, and will remove much needed money from their already insufficient budget unemployed people try to survive on. Congress, I second this motion. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sandy. 263, Southern Region.

UNDER 25 BENEFITS MOTION 263

263. UNDER 25 BENEFITS
Congress notes

- There has been continued discussion by both Labour and the Conservatives around cutting certain benefits for under 25's
- The cuts are being considered for income support, JSA and Housing benefit
- The cuts will come in the form of restrictions and means-testing, which will look at the young person's extended family as well as their own position.

Congress further notes

- These proposals come from a position of cutting welfare spending for under-25's however they are not tackling the problem of why under-25s need to claim benefits
- This is direct age discrimination against workers who may have contributed in tax and national insurance payments for over 8 years
- Homeless Charities believe that cutting housing benefit will make more young people homeless and therefore make it more unlikely that they will find sustainable employment.
- A significant proportion of GMB membership will be 25 and under.
- Such cuts to benefits may contribute to the prevention of young workers wishing to absent themselves from hostile homes.

Congress resolves

- To lobby both the government and the Labour party to try to prevent the adoption of such legislation
- For the GMB to inform its branches and members about the legitimate concerns and issues that will be caused by adoption of legislation of this kind
- To support action taken by groups to highlight or fight such proposals.
- To look to collaborate with like-minded groups around research in to the damage such policies would cause, challenging legislation and protesting against any such legislation.

M27 LB MERTON BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. J. ADIGWE (Southern): Congress notes that the two main political parties have been explaining means of cutting benefits for under-25s. The cuts being considered are for income support, job seekers allowance, and housing benefit. The suggested cuts are little more than a crude effort to blame the victims of political ineptitude for the situation they find themselves in. Taking cheap shots at young people who have suffered disproportionately during the Coalition Government's imposed period of austerity is little more than a cynical attempt to deflect attention from this Government's abject failure to create jobs for the young. Why is it that when more young people than ever can go to university and get degrees there is still very little prospect of them actually finding any type of meaningful employment at all. The attacks on the recipients of housing benefit also indicate that this Government have little understanding of why young people need the support. There are many reasons why some young people cannot live at the parental home, their parents may have died, their home may not have the space to accommodate a young adult, some leave home because they have been told to leave, some leave to escape abuse, and strange as it may seem some actually leave home to look for employment.

What this measure betrays is a mean and sour minded mentality that cares more for the ideological posturing than actually identifying the real reasons countless numbers of our young people have very little hope of finding a job let alone affording their own home. The fact is that for many young people housing benefit is a short-term solution that provides the vital support they need to enable them to look for work while maintaining some degree of independence. The inevitable consequence of this Government's proposal is that hundreds of thousands of young people will be forcibly driven into poverty; many of them will be our own members.

We resolve to impress upon this Government and the Labour Party that this organisation will never accept the imposition of legislation based on ideological chest beating. We will act to ensure that our members are fully aware of the dire consequences such legislation will have on individuals and families across the country. We will continue to campaign and agitate, and fight all attempts to implement this misguided policy. Congress, I move the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joe. Secunder. While the seconder is coming to the rostrum, will the movers of 265, Wales & South West Region, and 266, North West & Irish Region please come to the front?

BRO. S. BACCHUS (Southern): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) This Coalition Government has callously betrayed a generation of young people. Not only are there huge levels of unemployment among the young but those jobs that are available are often zero-hours, or limited hours, or precarious, and/or minimum wage. Young people face problems finding affordable housing and may be forced to live in situations where they are unsafe or potentially victims of abuse. Plans by the Coalition Government to cut benefits for young people must be opposed and the GMB must call on the Labour Party to be a champion of the rights of young people. I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sean. I now ask the mover from Yorkshire to move 264.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MOTION 264

264. SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

This Conference notes:

1. Tory members of the government including David Cameron have talked about reducing social security and benefits for young people between the ages of 16-25 year olds.

This Conference believes

2. Where poverty rates and homelessness is rising that implementing policies of this nature would be further detriment to our young people.
3. Young people already leave school with less hope of finding a job than before. To do so without support would further increase crimes rates and higher mental health issues in our young people.
4. Young people should be guaranteed training or work at the proper rate of pay. To simply stop benefits and not put in support measures would be a catastrophe.

This Conference resolves

5. To call for 16-25 year olds to have equal access to all benefits and services as the rest of the population.
6. To call for guaranteed jobs with equal pay.
7. A government run and regulated apprentice scheme, to ensure it is not abused by employers to subsidise the wage bill or to complete work that would have been done by full time permanent employees.

LEEDS GENERAL BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. C. GAVIN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I think most of my colleagues previous to me have already talked a lot about this and the impact it is going to have on our under-25s when losing their benefits. Last year David Cameron in his infinite wisdom in a speech stated that he would tackle the problem of NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). This was actually his way of saying, I

am concerned by Tory officials after the speech that under-25s would lose their automatic right to housing benefit and job seekers allowance if they refuse to take up offers of work, training, or education. Sadly, this move is likely to take effect if the Tories are elected to government in 2015. God help us all.

This American style Workfare for young people is a blatant attack on the welfare of our young. Poverty and homelessness is already rising under this Government and should this go ahead this impact will be devastating. Young people already leave school with less chance of achieving employment, they are forced to attend interviews for jobs they have little hope of obtaining, or have their benefits sanctioned and lose them for long periods of time. How can a government expect them to feed, heat, and travel to interviews all on just over £50 a week in most cases? If they are sent to an interview five days a week in my area, that is £4 bus travel a day in a limited zone, £20 a week, and no support from the job centre, or your money will be stopped. Mental health issues amongst our young are increasing. They see no future. They do not have any hope. To stop benefits and to have no support measures in place will be catastrophic. We would have rising cases of self-harm, mental health issues would rise, suicide and crime rates would go up.

I ask Congress to lobby this Government now, and a future Labour government, to call for equal access to benefits for our young people, call for guaranteed jobs with equal pay. I ask that we have a regulated apprenticeship scheme to ensure that it is not abused by employers to subsidise trade skills or complete work that should have been done by a full-time fully paid employee. Let's face it, £2.65 an hour is sanctioned slave labour. Our children are our future. Let's give them some hope. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cindy. Secunder.

BRO. A. ELSHAW (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) I was reading in *The Telegraph* on 7th June about apprenticeships, by Chris Jones. He was highlighting how important apprenticeships are in the workplace. The average hourly rate is £2.65, in an average 37-hour working week that is £94. As some young people are not dependent on parents and are living on their own, £94 a week is not enough. They will not even be able to make ends meet.

Youth unemployment is at its lowest for five years but how many of them are on zero-hours contracts or in training? At the moment, colleges and training providers offer a network of support. Under the reforms companies will have to take on this responsibility but many employers do not have the resources or in-house skills to do the training. This is a huge responsibility and yet another cost so who will be there for our apprentices. Without the right support we risk seeing more young people dropping out of the system. I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andrew. Can I now ask for the mover of 265?

OPPOSING WORKFARE SCHEMES MOTION 265

265. OPPOSING WORKFARE SCHEMES

This Conference notes that with unemployment amongst young workers running at approximately 20% (with some estimates citing over 1,000,000 unemployed young workers) Workfare schemes incur a particularly high incidence of young workers.

Young Workers are at particular risk of harm from Workfare schemes as they establish a precedent of barely existent wages (in the form of benefit payments) and poor terms and conditions. Prolonged unemployment can result in mental health issues and future pay disparity for young workers. Furthermore a damaging cycle may emerge of

young workers being shifted from one Workfare job to the next, in addition to this Workfare schemes are used to cover cuts made within some public services.

Such schemes must be anathema to those in the Trade Union movement. Workfare is profoundly detrimental to those on it, undercuts the wages of fellow workers and prevents a job role from being properly recompensed. One of the principles at the heart of the Trade Union movement is a fair and equitable wage in exchange for labour.

Congress believes that the most effective way to counter this threat is through building solidarity between all workers regardless of their employment status and vigorously opposing Workfare schemes at every level.

This Congress resolves to:-

- Support any anti-Workfare action undertaken under the auspices of Young Workers Month.
- Oppose Workfare by robustly lobbying for its end at those entities which support its delivery.
- Actively promote union membership and coverage (on unwaged rates) to those on Workfare schemes.

WALES & WEST UTILITIES BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. HAMBLIN (Wales and South West): Chris Rock once said, you know what that means when someone pays you minimum wage, you know what your boss is trying to say, it is like, "Hey, if I could pay you less I would, but I can't; it's against the law." Workfare seems to take that statement as a challenge. Workfare is nothing less than capitalist multi-tasking. It undermines terms and conditions, savagely attacks pay, and aims to foster a mindset that workers must be grateful for the scraps from the top table in exchange for their labour. I tell you now, the workers will be grateful when we have taken the whole spread back because we are the ones that put it there in the first place. That is when we will be grateful.

Some years ago I had the dubious rite of passage of being placed on a Workfare scheme, New Deal. As far as I could fathom, this replaced the old trade union One Deal of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and replaced it with an unfair day's work for an unfair day's pay, pay which is a fraction of the minimum wage. I leave it to Congress to fathom what kind of world we are giving our young people when we tell them that there is a basic standard of life, a basic standard of pay to which they should adhere to and the Government says, "In your case we will ignore it. We will disregard your rights."

Let us lay to rest the spurious argument that Workfare schemes are non-compulsory. If there is a choice between working in appalling conditions and starving, there is no choice. If freedom is to be saved and enlarged, poverty must be ended. There is no other solution, so spoke Nye Bevan. Supporting Workfare is tantamount to institutionalising poverty. The trades union Movement wants no part of it or its supporters. I urge you to support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Secunder.

SIS. C. SIBLEY (Wales and South West): President, Congress, the principle of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work is one of the core demands of the British trades union Movement. Workfare schemes clearly fail to satisfy this principle and represented by a spate of government initiatives which require benefit claimants to undertake unpaid work or face cuts to their benefit entitlements. Congress, this type of scheme is a badly disguised attempt to avoid the obligations of national minimum wage regulations by requiring people in receipt of benefits to work for nothing. At the same time there is a big advantage falling to employers who can use free labour and not have to employ people on a paid basis. Workfare effectively creates an underclass of people who provide temporary labour for the host employer, which

impacts both in terms of reducing the number of positions available and by restricting earnings opportunities for those who fall into these categories.

Workfare has already been proven a failure in many countries and it is very clear that this Government was disinterested in independent research findings and guided by the views and influence of their friends in big business. Congress, we have no problem with those who wish to take part in work experience programmes doing so but believe that they should be rewarded with an incentive to work in the form of an honest and fair wage. Workfare is becoming increasingly popular with employers, both the private and public sectors of industry, as they seek to plug the gap left by redundancies and budget cuts. Hospitals, councils, and public transport firms have all used Workfare for people to continue to provide services with the inevitable effect upon the amount of paid work available. Same old story, then, free schemes replacing real jobs and driving down workers' wages.

Colleagues, we need to continue to ensure that our opposition to Workfare is widely known and heavily criticised. Its viability is seriously in question and we must step up the campaign in what is an essential plank of the Government's attack upon welfare. Some employers have pulled away from Workfare and in some sectors it is wobbling. Some success has been notably achieved with local councils across the country that now will not have anything to do with these schemes. So, let's continue to devise strategies locally, regionally, and nationally to counter attack against this divisive and disgraceful form of exploitation. If they want our labour, they can damn well pay for it. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charlene. While I am calling the mover of 266, I remind Congress that 267 was withdrawn by the Southern Region in your Standing Orders Report No.3 this morning. Will the movers of Composite 28, North West & Irish Region, and Scotland, please come to the front? Midland Region and Southern Region, have the opportunity to come in on the debate. Then, 272, London Region, Composite 27, Northern Region to second, and priority given to London and Southern Region. Carry on.

INTRODUCTION OF MANDATORY RECONSIDERATIONS FOR BENEFITS MOTION 266

266. INTRODUCTION OF MANDATORY RECONSIDERATIONS FOR BENEFITS

From 28th October 2013, the Government introduced the fact that when a person who disagrees with a decision for benefits, such as Employment and Support Allowance, they can only request for a mandatory reconsideration. During this period they will not be awarded the benefit but will have to sign on for Job Seekers Allowance to gain any type of income.

This has a severe detrimental affect on the most vulnerable of our society. They can be waiting many months or even over a year to gain the right benefit for their needs. They will be on a reduced benefit or no benefit at all, they end up homeless and/or even more disabled than they were. Many disabled people forget to go to appointments or are too ill to go and end up with their benefits being sanctioned.

Add to this that many of these vulnerable people have lost their support network through services or by being made redundant from a job with support.

We call upon GMB to lobby the Government to give support to overturn this policy and to give support to these vulnerable people.

A08 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

BRO. M. MOLD (North West & Irish): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, I come to the platform for Motion 266, the mandatory reconsiderations for benefits, and this sets out the devastating effect that the policies of this uncaring Coalition have on real people and on the real lives of some of the most vulnerable in our communities. It is a policy that is actually so out of touch, so draconian, that the living standards of many of the people that are the most vulnerable in our communities would actually be increased if they were placed in prison. They would get three meals a day. There is no choice between heating and eating. There are no mounting debts, and prisoners certainly do not face the prospects of eviction. Congress, whilst those in prison face the loss of social freedoms, as idiotic as Iain Duncan Smith may well be surely even he can see the link between the loss of income and the loss of social freedom, but of course the problem is that while he can see it, him and George Osborne just simply do not care.

Let's look at the impact of this policy, let's look at how it affects the real lives of real people up and down our country. Mandatory reconsideration of benefits, as the title suggests the process is a must do thing for anybody who wishes to appeal a decision of the DWP, an extra hoop to jump through before you can lodge an appeal and a very devious underhand and immoral way to save money because, of course, while it is going through you can only claim Job Seekers Allowance, often at a reduced rate, or face the daunting prospect of no benefit at all.

Congress, in order to claim JSA, as we all know you have to jump through more hoops than a performing seal as it is, so the very people that are unfit for work now are having to declare themselves fit or face the daunting prospect of no benefits. This perverse situation, comrades, cannot be allowed to continue. Maybe Iain Duncan Smith can explain to us all how somebody who is disabled, who is unfit for work, can jump through a hoop, attend appointments when they cannot afford bus fares, or physically not capable of getting there, or as I suspect, Congress, is this just another Tory government telling the working class to get on their bike.

As if all this was not enough, like all of us vulnerable people facing rising energy bills, rising food bills, increases in council tax, and are more often than not further penalised by the pernicious bedroom tax, all this at a time when the Tory Party is saying, you are not entitled, you are not allowed, and callously labelling those on benefit as shirkers and scroungers. Think of the impact this has on a person, you are already struggling and then your benefit is withdrawn, that is like giving somebody on the Titanic a lifeboat with a hole in the bottom of it. You are going to sink, it just might take a little longer, that is all, because of course while it is going through there is no time limit on how long the DWP can take to reconsider your situation, so no time limit on your mounting debts and your struggle to survive. Faced with such odds is it any wonder that these people in this situation experience declining health, placing yet further pressure on our already overworked brothers and sisters within the NHS. Then, of course, such people may turn to legal loan sharks because it is better to do that than face further indignity of being evicted, indignity, comrades, that Iain Duncan Smith, George Osborne, and David Cameron, could not even begin to imagine, let alone understand because, of course, it is amazing how many barriers you can overcome when you have millions of pounds in the bank.

Comrades, it is our duty to protect the most vulnerable in society so let's send out this message to this Tory Government and say no to this particular policy, no, stop the hurting because it is not working. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Matthew. Secunder.

SIS. L. MERCER (North West & Irish): Congress, I deal with these issues on a daily basis. I help working men and women who have become disabled and they are reduced to begging because they have

become disabled, waiting weeks for benefit only to be turned down, and waiting months for reconsideration. For example, a 58-year old care worker who became an amputee applied for employment and support allowance. She waited 25 weeks for a decision. At that decision she was turned down because the medical officer stated she could walk and bend her knees. She attended the assessment in a wheelchair as she had only one leg. She had problems gaining Job Seekers Allowance as she was not fit for work. This left her in debt and her health deteriorated. She eventually gained full benefit entitlement after 14 months.

There are many more stories like this, stories of learning disabilities, brain injuries, stroke victims, who will not understand how to get appointments or are too ill to go. They do not complete forms and then face sanctions. Many vulnerable people have lost their support network through services that have been reduced through cutbacks. Some have been made redundant and do not have the support network they had within the workplace. We need a system that is fair, fair for everyone, and we need support for these people who have worked and for those who are struggling because they are disabled. I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Composite 28 to be moved by North West & Irish Region.

WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENTS

COMPOSITE MOTION 28

C28. Covering Motions:

268. LONG WAITING LIST FOR WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENTS WITH ATOS

(North West & Irish Region)

269. WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT *(GMB Scotland)*

WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENTS

When applying for Employment and Support Allowance, you are automatically awarded an assessment rate of £56.80 for under 25's or £71.70 for a period of 13 weeks. This is called the assessment phase and during this period most people will have to have a Work Capability Assessment medical through ATOS. Until they have this medical, they will have to stay on the lower income. The waiting lists are that long now that many people in the North West are waiting over 20 weeks for a medical, therefore living on a lower benefit.

Most people who apply for ESA have been working and paying into the system, they are treated with little or no respect and are made to feel like they don't deserve the benefit.

This Conference condemns the Department of Work and Pensions Work Capability Assessments, used to determine eligibility for employment and support allowance.

Dogged by problems since its inception in 2008 under a Labour Government and retained by the coalition, who's own Ministers admit is not fit for purpose.

GMB has an excellent history of working with disabled groups therefore we ask Conference to support & campaign along with disabled groups. Such as – We Are Spartacus – the Centre for Welfare Reform the Parkinsons Society UK, the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society, MS Society & the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, for the improvement of the Work Capability Assessment.

- We ask Conference to call on the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that anyone with a prognosis being unlikely to return to work in the longer term is placed into a support group rather than allocated to work related activity.

- We ask Congress to call on the D.W.P. to oblige ATOS professionals to seek further evidence to clinically justify their recommendation on likely return to work before being able to place anyone with a progressive condition in the work related activity group.
- We ask Conference to call on the D.W.P. to abandon prognosis statements which advise that a return to work could be considered in a certain timeframe, if that person has a debilitating progressive condition.

**GMB Scotland to Move
NW & Irish Region to Second**

(Carried)

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland) supporting Composite Motion 28, said: I wish to speak briefly today in support of this motion, which seeks to condemn the ongoing disgrace that is the Government's Work Capacity Assessments. Many of the problems presented by this policy are too many to name in the time I have. I would like to focus on two that I believe more than justifies Congress voting for this motion.

The first is the harm done to disabled citizens who have these tests imposed upon them. The second is the scourge of privatisation of our public services. On the former let me first mention my personal background and what has inspired me to speak to you today. My son, Stephen, lives with a condition which at some stage in his life may mean he is subjected to these assessments. I shudder to think what his future holds under the draconian traumatic system. The word "trauma" is not just one I think best sums up the impact of these tests, it was also the word used by Prof. Malcolm Harrington, who was put in charge of reviewing the shambles that are the Work Capacity Assessments by this Government.

Be under no illusion, Congress, only the most blinkered fail to see how poorly this policy serves disabled people, whether it be Prof. Harrington, Dame Ann Begg, MP, who chairs the Commons Welfare Select Committee, or whistleblowers within ATOS, or the victims themselves, everyone but Iain Duncan Smith can see the desperate problems caused by these assessments.

We all know from our communities and from the press the stories of disabled people having to face inadequate, invasive, and often downright humiliating tests at the hands of ATOS. I would dearly love to put these bureaucratic inadequacies through some tests and my tests would involve a cattle prod of 5,000 volts in Iain Duncan Smith's arse. *(Laughter/Applause)* Were it not enough to have your honesty questioned and your disability doubted, a great many times disabled citizens will find that their assessor has completely misjudged their conditions and circumstances, leaving them in a position of unbearable worry and often out of pocket.

Between the introduction of the policy in 2010 and now in 2014 1.5 million disabled people will have been assessed, that is 11,000 individuals a week, which is, by the way, the capacity of Dens Park, the home of my son's beloved Dundee Football Club. The results of these efforts have not been impressive: 59% of those assessed making a claim for ESA have been declared fit for work, 40% of these decisions have been appealed against and 38 of those appeals have been successful. Results so far from the reassessments of the remaining incapacity benefit claimants, which started in October 2010, show only a minority of 34% being found fit for work, a great deal of hardship only to find most claimants are honest and, indeed, telling the truth.

This is not all. Sadly, the situation gets worse. In 2012 1,100 people died after they had been deemed fit to work, that is 1,100 plagued by worrying doubt, who lost vital money and faced financial hardship in the final weeks and days of their life all because this Government and the private sector lackeys failed to

act in even the most basic modicum of decency and commonsense. A Tory-led government with commonsense, I think the term is called an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. Not only have these assessments caused hardship for our disabled citizens ----

THE PRESIDENT: Charlie! Have you moved already before the vote is taken in Scotland?

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: You have?

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: You have gone to Liverpool North West & Irish Region?

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): No.

THE PRESIDENT: They were supposed to be moving this resolution. You are seconding it. And you just got away with bloody murder! Four minutes! (*Applause*) Would you now please wind up before I take your passport all together?

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): The Government has not learnt the lesson that essential public services are best kept in public hands, not only do we ourselves have the expense of paying these companies to do the job, we are more likely to get a service which treats citizens in a fair and decent way. For these reasons, and more, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Now would the real mover please come and move Composite 28?

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): That's the first time I've been described as a real mover! (*Laughter*) Do you want it now on camera?

THE PRESIDENT: The thing is, Kevin, I know you!

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): I'll be good! I know you too, Sis, but I won't tell this lot. I tell you, we love Scotland; half of them are in Manchester and the other half are in Liverpool. (*Laughter*)

Can I just, therefore, second because I will take that as a moving speech. I will try and behave myself, President. Congress, ATOS conducting capability assessments was a major concern before it started. Now it is a complete and utter disaster. No wonder ATOS are pulling out of the actual £500m contract so that they can actually give it to somebody else. Well, thousands and thousands of people who have been subject to that test will not be very happy even with that. The 20-28 week delay is an absolute disgrace. One person who was sent to ATOS for an assessment actually went there in a taxi because of her disability, a few weeks later they had lost the test. They sent her back for a second assessment in another area. The assessor did not turn up. On the third occasion she actually had the test and then she waited several weeks and the whole process took 26 weeks, 26 weeks. What a disgrace.

Congress, it is not just ATOS doing it, it is the actual test is a disgrace. It is time we reformed it or got rid of it. I tell you what, ATOS, get out, give the £500m contract back to the people who need it, who need the real benefits, not the profiteers from people's sufferings, from people's disability, give it back, get rid of the tests. It is time for change and it is time we all said enough is enough, put dignity and care, and

love, at the heart of our system, not abuse, not actually destroying people, not leaving them in poverty. Congress, it is time for change. Don't just vote for it, get up and speak against it. Thanks very much indeed. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Don't set the trend. I am easily confused in the mornings. Can I now ask 272, London Region? I know them. The mover?

PIP ISSUES FROM ASSESSMENT DELAYS MOTION 272

272. PIP ISSUES FROM ASSESSMENT DELAYS

This Congress calls upon the Government to address the flaws in the PIP assessment process which could deny legitimate claimants the right to financial assistance to enable them the necessities they need to carry out everyday tasks.

SOUTHEND ON SEA BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. W. HARPER (London): Moving Motion 272, and bloody nervous! I urge Congress to address the imbalance in the assessment of Personal Independence Payments, or PIP. This process is flawed and is denying thousands of legitimate claimants the right to financial assistance enabling them to carry out everyday tasks. PIP commenced with replacing DLA in April 2013 for new claimants and those already receiving DLA whose circumstances had changed.

The Government tell us PIP is more objective, face-to-face consultations with independent health professionals, supporting evidence from a variety of health and other professional bodies, regular reviews to ensure that awards still meet needs. I do not know about you but I thought it sounded reasonable but with two separate healthcare companies each covering set areas of the UK could the Government ensure that strict assessment guidelines would be equally adhered to? The answer to that was that in June 2013 the Government had to put measures into place to ensure criteria were properly and consistently applied by both companies. So, was it working? Is this the cause of the delays in assessing claimants, or does the whole assessment process just take longer than originally perceived? Is it because a large number of claimants have been turned down and had to appeal and wait to win. Is the media correct in announcing that the delays are due to ATOS not being able to secure doctors willing to carry out assessments? Is this why they are withdrawing? What happens now to those claimants waiting vital funding? I do not have the answers but somebody in the Government must. Charities are rightfully concerned that while this is going on people are waiting months for money. Poverty is already a huge issue in itself so why are our Government knowingly adding to it? Even Boris Johnson objected to key welfare reforms warning that they could push disabled people further into poverty. Great, the Government have come up with an amazing idea to save money, cut financial assistance to those that need it to carry out everyday tasks that most of us take for granted, reduce PIP payments, or stop paying them all together. It is estimated that some 280,000 disabled people who would have received higher rate mobility under DLA could, by 2015, no longer be eligible for it under PIP resulting in mobility removing access to around 90,000 vehicles and scooters. Hang on, those lucky contestants who will be entitled to standard mobility are entitled to 50% car tax discount. Fantastic, if you can still afford to run a car, that is. So, you are left with online shopping, provided you have a computer or access to a local library, if it has not already been closed down, but that is another story. Is there an accessible bus stop offering a service to a local supermarket? There again, you actually have to live on a regularly running bus route. The crux of it, the Government is earning itself a huge bonus on top of its financial savings. I hope it is happy. It is denying people from

being able to do those everyday things many of us take for granted. Congress, please support.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Wendy, well done. Secunder. Hello, Dott, with two Ts. Is that my account there!

SIS. D. PETERSON (London): Once again this Government has gone off half-cocked, this time introducing PIP, and it is a mess. No surprise there, then. Already ATOS is pulling out, admitting that these assessments are not working to anybody's benefit. At present Personal Independent Payments are being launched by groups of postcodes at present affecting 16 to 64-year olds. I am 73 so at the moment I am safe but I am under no illusion that is going to be the case always. Our turn will come. If you presently are in receipt of DLA do not bank on this changing with the Government changes because new governments tend not to reverse big issues like this, so on paper it makes sense, in practice it just does not work. I ask you to support this motion. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dott, with two Ts. I now ask for the mover of Composite 27, Northern Region. You will not confuse me! Oh, North West & Irish Region.

BEDROOM TAX COMPOSITE MOTION 27

C27. Covering Motions:

- 273. PUNITIVE POLICIES (London Region)
- 274. BEDROOM TAX REMOVAL (North West & Irish Region)
- 275. BEDROOM TAX (North West & Irish Region)
- 276. BEDROOM TAX (Northern Region)
- 277. BEDROOM TAX (Northern Region)
- 278. BEDROOM TAX CONSEQUENCES (London Region)
- 279. BEDROOM TAX (Southern Region)

BEDROOM TAX

Congress is deeply disturbed at the plight of tens of thousands of people, many of them women with children, caught in the double barbs of withdrawn means tested Council Tax benefit and bedroom tax. Members who are already struggling to get by, often just about keeping their heads above water with all the extra charges on utility bills are now having to try and find some extra rent allowance as well. This extra charge is making people suffer more and more and this is why a lot of our members are off work with stress. Nor should we forget that it affects working as well as unemployed families.

This Congress recognises that the bedroom tax is unjust, discriminates against disabled and sick people, carers, separated parents, grandparents, the low paid and the poorest. It also affects families in terrible situations for example, families of service men and women, families whose children have died, people with disabilities or children with disabilities. Foster parents are only allowed one extra room no matter how many extra children they have to foster. Carers are not given any extra help. If you have a disabled member in the household you are not given an extra room even though that member might need their own room due to medical conditions or equipment. This is now going to the High Court and something or someone with some common sense needs to say they deserve a quality of life. We also have members who have split families. The parent without care or child benefit has to have a room suitable for the child to stay in. They would have to pay this out of their own income, as they would not be given the extra room allowance if they claim any housing benefit.

There needs to be help for people to get extra help to pay for this as local councils and social landlords are losing out, as they used to get the full housing benefit allowance. This is now not the case and they get 14% and 25% levy

against the property if there are not enough household members within that property. It will not reduce homelessness or housing benefit spending as claimed, and puts financial and social strain on communities, landlords and local authorities.

Many people across the country have already appeared in Court incurring further costs and from April of this year, could find themselves facing liability costs and eviction. Most residents of these low households cannot find suitable accommodation with the correct number of bedrooms and now they might even start to include dining rooms as an extra room. This makes it a tax on people who are unable to access an alternative.

All of this from the Con-Dem Government who imposed 2½% VAT increase on one hand but reduced income tax by 5p in the pound for the richest

Congress, we should campaign to have these and similar penalties removed as soon as possible. They are a blight on a modern society and bring shame on those who impose them. This Congress believes that the Bedroom Tax was a mistake and should not have been introduced in the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The tax is not only unjust but is unworkable with many councils not having alternative housing for these tenants. This conference believes that Labour councils should identify ways to prevent the bedroom tax being implemented and resulting in homelessness and poverty. Congress further believes that councils should be given more exemptions, including where they can and wish to let houses above the recommended size without penalty to the individual or council. We oppose the policy as a clear attack on the vulnerable, poor and powerless.

This Congress condemns as outrageous and inhuman, the way in which the bedroom tax, which we repudiated at last year's Congress, is splitting families and communities. David Cameron wants us to believe that he is family orientated, puts families first and wants us all to have good old-fashioned family values. But surely his 'bedroom tax' is doing the complete opposite. Forcing people to move from their homes in some cases a hundred miles, children to move from their schools and families to move to unemployment blackspots.

The ultimate bill in both monetary and family costs will ultimately be far more than any savings made from the heartless imposition.

For many people whose family has grown up and left the family home find they are now having to re-think their future in that home, which for many hold many treasured memories. Although these homes on the surface can appear too large for a couple or single person, they can serve a much needed purpose. Over the years the composition of British nuclear and extended families have greatly altered. We now have more and more 'blended' families, also added to this many families are strewn widely over the British Isles and sometimes even further afield. Having the 'family home' can be invaluable in such cases and enable families to be families far more easily and much more often, which can only be for society as a whole.

In the natural order of things, Grandparents play a huge and important role within the family with more and more having to step in and help and care for their grandchildren due to the cost of child care. Having a spare bedroom or two enables this to happen much more efficiently and smoothly. Many grandchildren sleep at their grandparents in the 'family home' so that their parents can work. Without this many families would simply not be able to have both parents working, or in the case of single parent families, that lone parent would find it impossible to find a job that fits around school, its hours and holidays, let alone if a child is poorly and unable to go to school.

In many cultures the older a person is, the more importance and respect is shown to them. Why is it that in today's Britain this seems to be in the reverse? We should be taking these people's feelings, opinions and wishes into account because the DO MATTER, they ARE VALUABLE members of our society and we have much to learn from them and most of all they ARE IMPORTANT and deserve our respect. How will the young people of our country ever learn that these people are worth listening to, learning from and mean anything if our Government do not? Young people learn from example. What example is being shown by the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' that respects no-one?

This Congress notes and applauds the decision, and is pleased to see that the Labour Party have pledged to abolish the bedroom tax when it next returns to government/power in 2015. However many people need protecting from this draconian tax now. This new tax is unfair, unjust and on a par with the 'poll tax' on its introduction.

Congress calls upon the CEC to act upon the Bedroom Tax and asks the CEC to do all it can for the removal of the new 'bedroom tax' as it is unfair to most of the people who it will affect.

Congress calls on the Department for Work and Pensions to conduct an urgent review of the policy and make changes and further believes that if the Department refuses to do this the policy should be scrapped altogether.

Congress calls on the Government to scrap the Bedroom Tax policy and to recognise that the impact of the Bedroom Tax has caused great distress and further reduced the social fabric in communities.

**North West & Irish Region to Move
Northern Region to Second
London Region, Southern Region Priority in debate**

(Carried)

BRO. G. CARTWRIGHT (North West & Irish): I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done.

BRO. G. CARTWRIGHT (North West & Irish): Bedroom tax, this new tax is unfair, unjust, and on a par with the poll tax with its introduction. David Cameron wants us to believe that he is family orientated, puts families first, and wants us all to have good old-fashioned family values but, surely, his bedroom tax is doing the complete opposite. For many people the family has grown up and left the family home and finding they now have to rethink the future in their homes, which for many hold many treasured memories. Although these homes on the surface can appear too large for a couple, or a single person, they can serve a much needed purpose.

Over the years the composition of the British nuclear and extended families has greatly altered. We now have more and more blended families. Also, added to this many families are strewn widely over the British Isles and sometimes even further afield. Having the family home can be invaluable in such cases and enable families to be families far more easily and much more often, which can only be good for society as a whole. In the natural order of things grandparents play a huge and important role within the family with more and more having to step in and help care for the grandchildren due to the cost of childcare. Having a spare bedroom or two enables this to happen much more efficiently and smoothly. Many grandchildren sleep at their grandparents' in the family home so that the parents can work. Without this many families would simply not be able to have both parents working or in the case of single parent families lone parents would find it impossible to find a job that fits around school, its hours and holidays, let alone if a child is poorly and unable to go to school.

In many cultures the older the person the more importance and respect is shown to them. Why is it that in today's Britain this seems to be in reverse. We should be taking these people's feelings, opinions, and wishes, into account. Of course they do matter, they are valuable, and they are members of our society and we have much to learn from them. Most of all, they are important and deserve our respect. How will the young people of our country ever learn that these people are worth listening to, learning from, and mean anything if our Governments do not. Young people learn from example. What example is being shown by the introduction of the bedroom tax that respects no one?

I will just add on to that, many people in here, I myself, you have grown up as a child looking forward to spending holidays at your grandparents, in the school holidays, going round to your grandparents as a child, as a 9-year old, not just going round and stopping for a weekend, but stopping for a couple of weeks at holiday time, going round helping them doing the shopping when they cannot get out as much, going round doing the gardening, and helping around the house. David Cameron says he is family orientated but he is going to destroy all that if we let him get away with it. We need this removing and we need it reversing. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Graham. Secunder. Northern Region.

SIS. V. DAVIDSON (Northern): Congress, the callous rich millionaires who sit in government today want to take all from the taxpayer and leave millions in poverty. They would have easily fitted into Victorian Britain. These Tories and their LibDem doormats are presiding over a bedroom tax that is crippling the lives of many people, people who do not want to be on benefits but because of circumstances they have nowhere else to turn. In Iain Duncan Smith and Esther McVey we have the Tory Bonnie and Clyde. We have Esther the spiv and Iain the quiet man. They have slimed up the greasy pole.

Congress, it does not matter if you are old, young, in work or out of work, able-bodied or disabled to this Government. They just want to inflict pain and misery on our people. Councils should not be penalised for giving some help to local people but yet again Whitehall dictates to local councils to get what Whitewall wants. Families should not be penalised for having a spare room; we all have them and for good reason. The state should not moralise and dictate how people run their lives. What should happen is that this policy should be scrapped. An incoming Labour government say they will do that and we should hold them to it. More affordable housing is a much more reasonable answer to these problems, instead of penalising local communities just because some right-wing Tories think we should all eat cake. Please support. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ronnie. Colleagues, can I say that this is an important debate and there are lots more speakers who are entitled to a priority in debate, and those who want to come in on some of the other resolutions but because of the time moving on, we will suspend this section until after lunch. I promise you, you will all get called in on that. We now have the question and answer session and need to welcome our guests. I give you my word. I know you have been sitting there for a long time patiently, and thank you. Does Congress agree? (*Agreed*) Thank you very much. You are good to me.

RACHEL REEVES, MP

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, congress, it gives me great pleasure to welcome Rachel Reeves MP to Congress. She was born in Lewisham, South East London, and was raised by her single mother. By the age of 8, she was already a keen Labour supporter. Rachel was elected in 2010 for Leeds West and has been one of the most spectacularly promoted members for this 2010 intake. Clearly a rising star. She is the first female MP to represent a Leeds seat since Alice Bacon, who served between 1945 and 1970. Within five months she was promoted to Shadow Minister at Labour's top table and within 17 months she became Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury. She is a member of the Fawcett Society and has blamed the banking crisis on a "macho" culture and called for more diverse and balanced boardrooms. Last year, she became Shadow Secretary responsible for the DWP and I know Rachel was listening quite intently to this debate.

Congress, after Rachel has spoken there will be an opportunity to ask her your questions and we have the man on my left, Kevin Maguire, here to facilitate the session. He did not bring Tory boy with him, we were hoping he would so we could give him as good hounding. Kevin, Rachel, welcome. (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES, MP ADDRESSED CONGRESS

RACHEL REEVES: President, Congress, it is an honour to address this Congress, your 125th anniversary of the foundation of this great Union. It is also an honour to follow the fantastic speakers who I have had the privilege to hear this morning. I think you have done a better job of summing up why we have to get rid of this Government than I can do: the bedroom tax, the treatment of disabled people, youth unemployment, zero-hours contracts, and all the other issues that you have raised in the debate this morning.

In his memoirs Will Thorne, legendary leader of the historical struggle for the eight-hour day, your first General Secretary, and also for several decades a Labour MP in the East End of London, describes the very first Congress of what was then The National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers. He said: "I stood before that conference and told delegates that the immediate objects of the Union were to improve the material conditions of its members, a more equitable division amongst all men and women of the tears and laughter, and joys and sorrows, of the labours and the leisure of the worlds."

That is exactly what this Union has been doing for working men and women for 125 years. That first conference wrote into your Union's constitution as a core objective to raise wages, and to obtain for the same work the same wages for women as for men. At Will Thorne's side when he made that speech was Eleanor Marx, who had helped the uneducated Thorne learn to read and write and as secretary to the conference made it all run smoothly.

As well as Eleanor Marx, the Union was strengthened and enriched throughout its history by many other extraordinary women, like Margaret Bondfield, who went on to become the first ever Labour Cabinet Minister; Leonora Cohen, the militant suffragette from Leeds who was imprisoned in my own constituency in Armley; and Mary Macarthur, whose campaigns to expose conditions and organise workers in sweated industries like textiles and chain-making resulted in the first steps towards the establishment of a minimum wage in this country through the creation of Trade Boards and later Wage Councils.

It is a pleasure to share this platform today with Paul Kenny and Mary Turner, who can take their place in the roll call of great GMB men and women. (*Applause*) It is also exciting at Congress to hear about all the ways this Union is now taking forward those values in the 21st century. Recruiting and organising in today's growing sectors, like social care and retail, brilliant campaigning that has helped shape the national agenda in areas like housing, social care, and more, and getting your members to support their need in today's world with innovative services like UnionLine.

The work that this Union does is as vital today as it ever was. Today as much as ever working people need a voice. When we have a government that is so out of touch with the reality of life for ordinary people that it is claiming victory and vindication for its policies despite the fact that the average worker is £1,600 worse off than when David Cameron became Prime Minister. The number of people earning less than a living wage has soared to record levels under the Tories and more and more are stuck on zero-hours contracts or in temporary and part-time work not being able to afford to make ends meet.

Just this morning we have been warned by the Government's own Child Poverty Commission that the number of children living in poverty is now set to soar to one in five by 2020, with Oxfam reporting that over the past year food banks and other charities have handed out a staggering 23 million meals to people who cannot afford to feed themselves and their families. I say that is a disgrace. Working people are finding it harder and harder to keep up with the rising cost of living and with home ownership and a

decent pension seemingly further out of reach for so many, parents and grandparents are worried about whether their children or their grandchildren can ever expect the security and quality of life that an earlier generation took for granted.

It is those fears for the future and anger about an economy that just is not working for so many that allows UKIP to pose as the phoney friend of working people, even though their real agenda would be to strip away workers' rights and drag this country back to the deepest darkest days of Thatcherism. And an even more serious worry than the numbers who voted for UKIP last month is the far greater numbers of working people who did not vote at all. Millions who not only feel that the economy is leaving them behind but also, as Ed Miliband warned last week, feel shut out of politics as well and no longer see the democratic rights that workers fought for, for the vote, that earlier generations took so seriously as a way to build a fairer future for their families and for their communities.

I know that everyone here is as worried as I am by the disillusion and disengagement that we see but I think we could be, and should be, optimistic. We have the opportunity together to turn this around and restore people's faith in the potential of politics to make a difference to their lives. We have that opportunity because the Labour Party and trade unions like the GMB have been working together to forge an agenda that is both radical and realistic, offering practical solutions to the problems that people face and the prospect of a better Britain in which everyone has a chance to play their part, everyone has a stake, and where prosperity is fairly shared.

We know that the way to answer the anxiety that some feel about immigration is to ensure that migrant workers are not exploited as a way of undercutting wages and conditions for everyone. We will toughen up enforcement of the minimum wage, clamp down on agencies and employers with discriminatory recruitment and working practices, and make sure that EU rules, like the Posted Workers Directive, serve to prevent, not encourage, a race to the bottom on terms and conditions. As a Shadow Works and Pensions Secretary, I know that the way to respond to the concerns that some people have that spending on social security is too high or goes to the wrong people is to make sure that everyone who can work has both the responsibility and the opportunity to do so, and at the same time doing more to make sure that work pays, offers security, and a decent chance of progression so that we are not relying on benefits to make up for inadequate or irregular wages, while profits and directors' pay just go up and up.

These are my commitments to you: Labour will guarantee a job for every young person out of work for a year and for everybody else out of work for two. We will set an ambitious target for the National Minimum Wage so that it rises by more than average earnings and support the spread of the living wage too where I am pleased to say Labour local authorities from Lewisham to Cardiff, to Sheffield, working with the GMB, are leading the way.

Labour will end the abuse of zero-hours contracts so that people who are putting in the hours month after month get the security and the certainty that they deserve.

Labour will crack down on bogus self-employment in the construction sector so that those who do the work of a regular employee get the security, the right, and the National Insurance contributions of a regular employee.

Labour will look to reverse this Government's wrongheaded restriction of the automatic enrolment system for workplace pensions so that 1.5 million low paid part-time workers, the majority of them women, can benefit from the tax relief on savings and contributions from their employers and build a pension pot of their own so that they too can have a retirement to look forward to.

Most of all, we will always work with unions like the GMB to build an economy that prospers and succeeds, not on a basis of cutting wages or working conditions but through investment, in infrastructure, in training, in technology, and innovation, so that high quality, high skilled, well paid jobs with good career prospects, are becoming more commonplace, not less, so that your members and their families have a bright future where, as your founders campaigned for more than a century ago, the division of income and wealth are more fairly shared.

While we are talking of building a better Britain let me touch on a topic that has always been a big campaigning issue for Paul and for the GMB, and it is absolutely critical to the challenge that I would face as Work and Pensions Secretary, that is the availability of good quality and affordable housing. This Tory-led government, despite the rhetoric, are spending more on housing benefit and not less. As the GMB have highlighted, much of it goes into the pockets of private landlords, including some prominent members of political parties who seek to stigmatise and demonise far less well rewarded welfare recipients.

Today we are publishing new figures from the House of Commons Library which show that the cost of paying housing benefit to people in work is now set to rise by another £1bn by 2018. That is money that could have paid for 24,000 more nurses, or 30 million GP appointments, or more than 10,000 affordable homes, but instead it is going into the pockets of private sector landlords.

Congress, housing benefit is now the fastest growing element of the Social Security Bill and we all know why that is, we have more people than ever who are working but not earning enough to be able to afford to pay the rent, let alone save for a mortgage. We have the lowest level of house-building since the 1920s whilst the number of council houses just falls. That is why the radical plans that Emma Reynolds MP will be talking to you about tomorrow to get 200,000 additional homes built a year by the end of the next Parliament, alongside the security we will offer to families who rent are so important. Not only will this improve living conditions for those in overcrowded or shoddy accommodation but it will restore the hope of home ownership to many for whom it now seems out of reach. Not only does it have the potential to create thousands more decently paid construction jobs and apprenticeships, it is the best way to control the benefits bill as well.

What do the Tories have to say about all of this? They said that our plans to get better deals for renters were Venezuelan style socialism and that asking developers sitting on land to use it or lose it was Mugabe-esque expropriation. Well, what can we say but, “Calm down, dears.” What is their policy, though, to control the housing benefit bill? We heard it this morning, it is the bedroom tax, a vicious policy that hits half a million households, two-thirds of them disabled, with a punitive and unjustifiable penalty that is pushing increasing numbers of people to food banks, into poverty, and into debt. It is pointed by charities as a key cause of that rising reliance on food banks and it is no even saving money. Unlike what the Government said, it is wreaking havoc on local housing policies and on the finance of the social providers and because simply so many people can just not afford to pay it.

Congress, I mentioned earlier our plans to crack down on bogus self-employment in construction, which I am proud to have worked on in my previous role in the Shadow Treasury team. I am even more proud to be able to say that when a Labour government is elected next year my first act as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will be to use that money that we raise by cracking down on bogus self-employment to do the right thing and to scrap the vicious and cruel bedroom tax. (*Applause*)

Before I finish let me say something about an issue on which this Union has a proud history of campaigning and one which I care hugely about, that is justice for disabled workers. Earlier this year, thanks to Tim Roache, Steve Jennings, and Bob McNeill from GMB’s Yorkshire Region – (*Cheers*)

Hello, Yorkshire – I had the privilege of meeting a group of former Remploy workers, including James Stribley, Tony Gledhill, Todd and Steve Mellor, Steve Cooke and Clive Prince. (*Applause*) They told me how hard it has been to find work since the closure of the local Remploy factories. Despite the Government's pledge to help former employees find new jobs, this is just not happening, with the latest figures showing that the Government's flagship work programme is performing terribly for those on disability benefits, helping just 5% into work.

Paul Kenny shared with me the latest results from GMB's survey of former Remploy workers. Just 24% of almost 500 respondents were now working. Almost half are not getting the hours they used to. More than half were on lower pay than before. A quarter had retired but 53% were still looking for work. Those figures are staggering but what was even more moving was the comments some had left. One simply says: "No job. No hope. No help."

Congress, unlike this Government, I believe that disabled workers should have hope, they should have help, and they should have work. (*Applause*) Yes, disabled people should be integrated into the workforce but former Remploy workers are not being integrated, they are being left behind and they are being abandoned. We must do better than this and a Labour government will do better than this.

Kate Green, Shadow Minister for Disabled People in my team, and Steven Timms, Shadow Employment Minister, are consulting on how we improve and support opportunities for disabled people who want to work. We will be particularly keen to hear from the GMB and its members about your experiences and your ideas as we seek to ensure justice for former Remploy workers and for the thousands of disabled people who desperately want to work.

So, Congress, in conclusion, we need to work together to develop that common agenda on rights and opportunities for disabled workers, as we are on the other areas that I have mentioned, creating jobs, improving pay, protecting employment standards, extending pension coverage, boosting skills and apprenticeships, investing in houses and infrastructure, and the industries of the future. That is the practical programme that we need, to restore people's hopes that Britain has a better future, and we need your help to get it right, and to get that message out to the people who need to hear it. It is a challenge that this great labour Movement of ours, the Labour Party and trade unions working together has risen to time and again in our history. We know that we cannot afford another five years of Tory misrule, five more years of tax cuts and favours for a privileged few, whilst things just get harder and harder for everybody else.

Let's campaign with confidence and optimism that the prize of victory is not just getting rid of the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, as good as that will be, but a new beginning for our country, a new chapter in our progress towards the just society that this Movement's founders dreamed of, campaigned for, and fought for. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rachel, very much indeed. Congress, I am going to tell you how this is going to proceed in the questions and answers. There will be a standing mike in the centre which you can see on my left. Once you are called to speak, please make sure you state your name and region, and ask your question. Please keep your questions to questions and no long speeches. That means a lot of people can get in and have their say. Thank you, Congress. I am going to leave you in the good hands of Kevin Maguire, who is now going to take over.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Mary Kevin Maguire, *Daily Mirror*, first time speaker! (*Applause*) It is wonderful to be here and inspired by the GMB, a trade union fighting back as the world of work can be so brutal at times. Of course, as well as fighting back as a trade union you need a government that could be on your side and sympathetic and, Rachel, you would be in the Cabinet almost certainly if Labour win next May. Are you going to win?

RACHEL REEVES: We certainly are.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: That's sorted. Right. You heard it here first. The first speaker is Amanda Burley of Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, who has a question on young people, and if Alison Cousin, Charlene Sibley, and Kerry Humphreys could come up front to be ready, please? Amanda, thank you.

SIS. A. BURLEY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Hello, Rachel. As an excellent Labour Leeds MP you will be aware that the north/south divide is getting wider. Nine out of 10 young people black spots are in the north, pay for women in the north is actually going down, and local authorities in the north are suffering cuts ten times as hard as those in the south. What needs to be done to reverse this? (*Applause*)

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you. Rachel.

RACHEL REEVES: Thanks, Amanda. In my constituency of Leeds West two of our wards, Armley and Bramley, have around a third of young people not in education, employment, or training, so I know only too well about these issues. It is not just a north/south thing. There are lots of areas in London and the South East as well that have high levels of youth unemployment and we need to ensure that jobs are available wherever those statistics exist. That is why we have said that every young person who has been out of work for a year should be guaranteed a job and that will be a paid job for six months paid for by repealing the tax on bank bonuses and also by restricting pensions' tax relief to the wealthiest, but you are also right that there are particular challenges in the north of England. This Government think that HS2 is all you need to do to ensure that the north has the same opportunities as the south, but as you know HS2 will not be coming to Leeds or Manchester until 2030-something. In the meantime, we need much greater devolution of powers to cities like Leeds and Newcastle, Sheffield and Manchester, so that we can make decisions for ourselves to invest in infrastructure, particularly transport, but also housing, to ensure that we have a fair deal for the north, which I do not think we have today. Thanks, Amanda.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you. London's Alison Cousin on zero hours.

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): Rachel, we have had many a debate at Congress over the evil that is zero-hours contracts, you mentioned it briefly there in your speech. What we would like to know is could you please outline for us how a Labour government would abolish zero-hours contracts? (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: Thanks, Alison. As you know, around 1.5 million people, according to the Office of National Statistics, are on zero-hours contracts but the reality may be even higher than that. Many of you who work in social care will have seen that growth in zero-hours contracts. We have said that we would do a number of things to end the abuse of zero-hours contracts. First of all, you should not be tied to one employer if they are only offering you a zero-hours contract. So, if I offered you a zero-hours contract, Alison, which I would not, but if I offered you a zero-hours contract I would not be able to prevent you from also getting a job working for Kevin, which is what exists at the moment. We have also said that if you work a regular set number of hours for a number of months, then you should have the right to request a permanent contract. If you do not get that after a few more months, you will get the right to that

permanent contract in the same way that you have in the past with temporary work. So, those are some practical changes that we think would root out that abuse of zero-hours contracts.

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): Rachel, thank you very much. We look forward to that happening.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Couldn't a Labour government just ban zero-hours contracts? (*Cheers/Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: I think we have to ban and stop the abuse of zero-hours contracts. The reality is for some people zero-hours contracts work for them, certainly not for 1.5 million people (*noises of dissent*) but I know students who are constituents of mine who do want to have that flexibility to only work when they want to work and I also know retired people who want to have that flexibility. What has happened, though, with the growth of zero-hours contracts is that it has been exploited and it is abusing people. You have to get that balance right but I think those practical policies to root out that abuse is the right way forward without taking the flexibility away from some people who want it.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Wales and South West, Charlene Sibley, has a question on unpaid internships. Thank you.

SIS. C. SIBLEY (GMB Wales and South West): Hi, Rachel. Will a Labour government abolish unpaid internships for Labour MPs and across other sectors? (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: It is at the moment illegal not to pay somebody. The problem is that it is not being enforced properly. I think what you need is proper enforcement of the current legislation. At the moment it is illegal to take somebody on and give them a job with roles and responsibilities, times that they have to turn up, as you would have in a normal job, but not to pay them. Unfortunately, that is not being enforced in any sector of the economy. I think that we need to have proper enforcement of those rules to ensure that you do not have those unpaid internships which are exploitation, particularly of younger workers.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Charlene. Thank you, Rachel. Kerry Humphreys of Midland & East Coast, has a question on free school meals. Could Barbara Plant, Kevin Flanagan, and Yvonne Morris, please come to the front? Thank you.

SIS. K. HUMPHREYS (Midland & East Coast): Morning, Rachel. The LibDem sold out lone parents like me in a trade-off for getting free school dinners for the under-8s so the Tories could implement the married man's tax allowance. If families like mine are going to be demonised then let it be for a worthy cause, not just lip service. Will the Labour Party go one step further and offer all children and young people in education free school dinners? (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: What we have said is that we are against the married man's or the married couples' tax allowance. We do not think that is fair or right and I hope that a future Labour government will get rid of that married man's tax allowance, which does nothing to help the vast majority of families. We are not going to be able to make unfunded spending commitments. There are so many things we want to reverse. We have been clear that we will reverse the bedroom tax by imposing that tax on bank bonuses and also by restricting pensions tax relief. We would reintroduce a 10p starting rate of tax by having the mansion tax but I am not going to be able to commit today that we will have free school meals for all children; of course, the free school meals that the Government are now rolling out was based on the pilots that Labour had in areas like Hull and Newham before the last election, which the Tories and Liberal Democrats cancelled when they came into government. I understand and I support free school meals but we cannot make unfunded spending commitments.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Kerry. Southern's Barbara Plant has a question on the Independent Living Fund.

SIS. B. PLANT (Southern): Rachel, how will Labour redress the ridiculous false economy of removing benefits like the Independent Living Fund, which will ultimately cost more as many disabled people have to leave the workforce and become more dependent on expensive care?

RACHEL REEVES: Thank you, Barbara, for that question. We have been campaigning and opposing the changes that the Government have made and despite the High Court judgments the Government are still looking to cancel the Independent Living Fund for people who are currently getting it. We have opposed that and we will continue to oppose it. We hope that it will not go through during the course of this Parliament but we will see what happens. I agree with you that, as with many of the changes that we have seen, they are often short-sighted and end up costing more than they are going to save, as with, for example, the bedroom tax. If it means that disabled people are not able to go out to work, for example, or if it means they are not able to get the treatment they need and they end up becoming more isolated and therefore needing more medical support, and other support in the future, so we have opposed the changes, let's see what happens in the next few months and see whether some reprieve can be come to following those High Court judgments; but we have opposed it as it has gone through Parliament.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Barbara. We have a Living Wage question from North West & Irish Region, Kevin Flanagan.

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): I heard you say a few minutes ago that you would help the spread of the living wage. If you were to become Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in the next Labour government, will you pledge to implement a living wage procurement policy? (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: Thanks, Kevin. I have worked really closely with Ed Miliband over the last few years on our policy around the minimum wage and the living wage. We got Alan Buckle to do a review for us. Alan used to work for KPMG, which is one of the earliest firms to become a living wage employer. He produced a report a few weeks ago that recommended the Government become a living wage employer, including all of its procurement policies. Ed said a little bit about that a few weeks ago, but I expect as we lead up to conference he will have more to say about that. Believe you me, I want nothing more than everybody who is paid for by taxpayers' money to be paid a living wage.

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Thank you.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: We have a question on social care from Northern Region's Yvonne Morris, but could Anne Dean, Natale Haden-Davies, and Tony Gledhill, please come to the front too, to be ready.

SIS. Y. MORRIS (Northern): Hello. Our members in the private social care sector are in a minimum wage industry with our members topping up their wage with state benefits. Will Labour commit to placing this sector on a much better funding regime to bring in a living wage and reduce state subsidy to a low-wage section?

RACHEL REEVES: Thanks, Yvonne. Social care is one of those sectors that has the worst record, I think, both in terms of zero-hours contracts and in terms of people not being paid a living wage. If we commit to everybody in government, including people who are contracted out, being paid a living wage, that has to include the social care sector. Some councils, like Islington and Birmingham, have worked really hard as they have become living wage employers to get all of their contracted out workers, including in social care, paid a living wage. We know it can be done. The Joseph Rowntree Trust, who

also run care homes in the North of England, have also started paying all of their care workers a living wage, so we know it can be done. I cannot make a pledge to you today but, as I said, Alan Buckle has done this report for us and we are working on our response to that. One of the key recommendations in there is that the Government becomes a living wage employer but also the contracted out and procured services a living wage as well. We certainly want to move in that direction. You will have to wait till party conference and the manifesto to see our commitments but I pledge to you that that is what we want to do.

SIS. Y. MORRIS (Northern): Thank you, Rachel.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Scottish Region's Anne Dean has a question on the benefit cap.

SIS. A. DEAN (GMB Scotland): It is only two pages! (*Laughter*) Rachel, Labour voted with the Coalition Government for the benefit cap which hit at the needy and the vulnerable. Can you tell us why? (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: Yes, okay, Anne. Ed Miliband said in a speech in January this year that Labour would support a cap in overall benefit expenditure so we voted for it a few weeks ago in Parliament. We have been very clear about the ways in which we want to control the costs of social security. First of all, we want to build more housing, including affordable and social housing to bring down the housing benefit bill. Second, we want more people being paid a living wage so that we are paying less out in benefits to people who are in work through tax credits and housing benefit. We want fewer people who are working part-time but want a full-time job having to rely on benefits to be able to make ends meet, and fewer people on zero-hours contracts. So, whereas this Government wants to reduce the social security bill by reducing entitlements to support, we want to control the costs of social security by ensuring that everybody who wants to work is working, that everybody who wants to work full-time can work full-time, and that people when they are at work are taking home a wage that they can afford to live on. That is a very different approach but both would control the costs of social security. Ours would do it in a way consistent with Labour and trade union values and this Government consistent with their values, which is about hurting the most vulnerable, as so many people have spoken about this morning.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Anne. Natale Haydon-Davis, of Birmingham & West Midland, has a question on benefit fraud.

SIS. N. HAYDON-DAVIS (Birmingham & West Midland): Hello. People in this hall know that benefit fraud is a tiny proportion of overall spending but people out in the country do not. How are we going to change that?

RACHEL REEVES: You are right, benefit fraud I think counts for something like 0.7% of total spending on social security. I think what people do think, though, is that tax evasion and tax avoidance is a much bigger issue than benefit fraud. What you do not see from this Government is anything like the amount of activity going after the big tax avoiders, whether it be big corporates or rich individuals, but an awful lot of effort demonising people on benefits and going after benefit fraud. A future Labour government would make a priority of going after tax avoidance and tax evasion to ensure that everybody pays their fair share and I think that taps into the sense of fairness amongst the British public that, yes, people should be able to do well and get on in life, but if they do well they should certainly pay the taxes that they should do, whether they be big individuals or big corporates, who at the moment are getting out of paying their fair share of tax and, as a result, putting more pressure on the rest of us, whether that be in cuts in services or tax increases for ordinary working people.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Rachel, you rightly said that tax evasion is a bigger problem than benefit fraud. It is kind of rife now in housing where landlords get paid housing benefit from taxpayers and then they put it in offshore accounts and they do not pay tax back to pay for that housing benefit that they receive. Can you give a pledge on that, in particular, these greedy bastards, basically. Sorry, but they are. *(Cheers/Applause)* They are milking the system.

RACHEL REEVES: Yes, they are. Let me say a couple of things about it. First of all, we want fewer people having to rent in the private rented sector because we want there to be more building of social and council housing so that instead of paying out money to private sector landlords we are investing in housing, which is why Emma Reynolds, the Shadow Housing Minister, will talk about this when she addresses Congress tomorrow. We want to move money from housing benefit to investing in bricks and mortar. A generation ago 90% of the housing budget was spent on house-building and just 10% on housing benefit. That number has now gone in absolute reverse and 90% is spent on housing benefit and just 10% is spent on bricks and mortar. Yes, we need to do something about those private sector landlords but we need also to root out the need to have private sector landlords which is a failure in our housing policy. We also need to do something, and this is about the issue you raised and also about the wider issue that has just been raised of tax avoidance and tax evasion. We have a David and Goliath type situation where you have big corporates and rich individuals who can access very clever lawyers and accountants while the HMRC, who is supposed to enforce the tax code, have had something like 25% or more cuts over the last four years and, as a result, people can get away with not paying the tax they should be paying because there is nobody to enforce it. We need to crack down on tax avoidance and tax evasion by having the proper enforcement of the tax code that we have and to make illegal these tax havens that exist. Part of that is working with other countries but also it is about doing our job as well because, of course, we control many of these tax havens but we do not control them in a way that cuts down on this avoidance and evasion that we see.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you. The last question of this session is from Yorkshire & North Derbyshire, Tony Gledhill, on Remploy. Thanks, Tony. *(Applause)*

BRO. A. GLEDHILL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Thank you. Tony Gledhill, ex Remploy worker, still here, still fighting. *(Cheers)* Rachel, if disabled people and people with health conditions are to continue to be found fit for work under the discredited work capability assessment, what is a future Labour government going to do about the employers and the discrimination against those with disabilities and health issues, particularly those with a history of mental health issues? *(Applause)*

RACHEL REEVES: Yes. Thanks, Tony, and for everything that you do as well. First of all, the Work Capability Assessment and the way that we treat people who have disabilities when they go for those assessments have to change. You said as a premise to that question that things will continue as they are. They will not under a Labour government. We will reform the support and help, and the way that those assessments take place, and ensure that we clear the backlogs and people are not waiting for 26, 28, 14 months, that many delegates spoke about this morning. We will also ensure that disabled people and disabled campaigning groups have a say about how the Work Capability Assessments and PIPs work so that we restore some dignity into the system, so that people get the support they need, whether that is support to stay on benefits or support to get back into the workplace. Let me first of all make that commitment to you.

You are also right, Tony, that we need to do much more to work with employers to ensure that if somebody is assessed as fit to work there are employers who are not just willing but keen to take those workers on, whether it be people with physical or mental health difficulties. We need to do much more there, working with Scope, with Remploy, with different campaigning groups. I have had a number of

meetings, though, with big employers who do recognise the value of taking people on who have been either long-term unemployed or with a disability; they often see those people as the most loyal workers they can get because if they have been out of work for a long time, and someone gives you that opportunity that you have not had for so long, you are likely to put in that extra effort. There are employers who are enlightened and want to do the right thing but I think there is a big education project that needs to be done with employers. It is not just about corporate responsibility and doing the right thing, it is also that disabled people have so much to offer and at the moment we are losing out on their skills and potential which is holding back our economy because we make judgements about people that are totally unfounded. So, there is a big education project as well, I think, to be done with employers and which we should do with the trade unions too to ensure that disabled people get a fair chance.

BRO. A. GLEDHILL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I agree with that. Thank you very much.
(*Applause*)

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thanks, Tony. Rachel, thank you because you answered all those questions honestly and directly, and you did not avoid any of the questions, you gave an answer to every one.
(*Applause*) That is terrific. How do you find Mary's chairs? These are from your house, aren't they, Mary? Don't they have to go back later?

RACHEL REEVES: Very comfy; I might take it home with me.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I say thank you to Rachel on behalf of Congress and thank Kevin Maguire for doing such a magnificent job. (*Applause*) The position of Chair is not for sale! Kevin, thank you. We have great respect for you both.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: I will be off!

THE PRESIDENT: Would you like a little gift?

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Oh, yes!

THE PRESIDENT: And Rachel.

RACHEL REEVES: Thank you very much.

KEVIN MAGUIRE: Thank you very much. What I would really like is one of those framed photographs, I have seen them all over the place, there is some bloke, he has a bit of paper and he is going like *that*. I think he is trying to sell a used car! (*Laughter*)

THE PRESIDENT: That was Paul Kenny! (*Applause*)

KEVIN MAGUIRE: I would like a 2003 Mondeo, please. Thank you.

(*Presentations amid applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Conference, thanks for hanging on. It was very interesting and the questions were great. I will now close Congress. Back at 2.15 sharp. Thank you.

London Region, you are having your picture taken down here.

Conference adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION

(Congress resumed at 2.15 p.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Will Congress please come to order.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 4:

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I call on Helen Johnson to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 4.

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Midland & East Coast, Standing Orders Committee Chair): Congress, I move SOC Report No. 4. President and Congress, I am pleased to report that, on the subject of bucket collections, we have been informed that the collection yesterday for the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice raised a total of £549. *(Applause)*

On the subject of the Congress agenda, the SOC wants to remind delegates that you need to be ready down *here*, at the front, when it is your turn to speak. Seats are provided for that purpose at the front, this saves Congress time and it makes it fair for all of the delegates. We are running slightly behind at the moment, as you know, and we have a very full agenda in the remaining days. The SOC doesn't really want to have to look at shortening speaking times because, again, that is not fair to everybody, but can we just ask that everyone is on time and be at the front when you are called. Mary has asked you and we are asking you again. It would be very helpful for everybody and we will keep the position under review. I move SOC Report No. 4. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Are there any comments? *(No response)* Do you agree the report?

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 4 was CARRIED.

I now go back on the previous debate, which was Composite Motion 28. Does anyone wish to speak on the debate? I call Southern.

SIS. A. WIJE (Southern): Congress, I am speaking in support of Composite 28. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* The Employment and Support Allowance has proved itself to be not fit for purpose. Story after story has emerged of delays with assessments which leave claimants in limbo, promised appointments that don't materialise, assessments that ask irrelevant questions, such as, "Can you write a CV?", but no questions about the medical condition itself, there are stories about medical evidence being ignored and a particular lack of understanding as regards mental health issues. There are stories of meritorious claims being rejected and claimants being unfairly categorised. There is a fundamental problem that the criteria for receiving the ESA is very narrow. There are stories of the wrong ESA being paid or not being paid on time or at all. There is then an appeal procedure through the Courts Service that is, itself, traumatic for vulnerable claimants, and there are also stories of complaints not being replied to or acknowledged and delays with getting back pay. The whole criterion procedure for receiving ESA should be reviewed. I will leave you with a quote from one chap. He sought a postponement of his capability assessment until after his sister's funeral. He was refused. He said: "Dear Mr Cameron, you are an absolute disgrace and you should be ashamed of yourself. You persecute and victimise the vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. I will never forget how I was treated by ATOS, and next year I will be doing all within my power to ensure that you do not get another term in Government." I support.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I now move to back to Composite Motion 27 on the Bedroom Tax, which was moved this morning. London Region and Southern Region have priority in debate.

BRO. D. RIGBY (London): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of Composite 27 – Bedroom Tax. Conference, how apt it is that we are in Nottingham, famous for the Sheriff of Nottingham. He, himself, was a famous tax robber, taking from the poor. It was all legal, mind you. Well, we now have a new robber or two. We have Robin the Bastard Cameron, the Sheriff of the UK, and his sidekick, Clegg the Fleaser. The UK has quite a lot of taxes. Here are some of them: Income Tax, Fuel Duty Tax, the dreaded VAT, Vehicle Excise Duty Tax, Insurance Premium Tax, Capital Gains Tax, Inheritance Tax, Council Tax. The list is endless. Those are just a handful of taxes that we pay. The dreaded Bedroom Tax came into force on none other than April 1st 2013. When people rent their homes they do not know for how long their families will be in their houses or bedrooms for, but to tax people for having, so-called, under occupancy is ludicrous. People stand to lose 14% for one bedroom not occupied and 25% for two bedrooms not in use. People stand to lose £14 a week and housing association tenants will lose £16 a week. The proposal affects an estimated 660,000 working age social tenants. Congress, this tax must be abolished. It is a vote winner for Labour. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Southern Region.

BRO. C. WATTS (Southern): Congress, I am speaking to Composite 27 – Bedroom Tax. Congress, I have a little problem where people keep stating that the Con-Dem Coalition Government are out of touch and that this Bedroom Tax comes from them being out of touch. I think that that does the Tories a great disservice, to be honest. I don't think it is a case that they are out of touch. It is more a case of they knowing exactly what they are doing. This is not a policy that will have any effect in reducing the deficit. It is a policy that is specifically designed to divide and demonise sections of our community, fuelled by the right-wing press. It is also designed to destroy the spirit of those who are most vulnerable to ensure that they do not go out and vote. The Tories know exactly what they are doing and they just do not care. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone else wish to come in on the debate that we had this morning.

BRO. C. HAMPTON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, for nearly 30 years I have been a campaigner on unemployed issues through the TUC Unemployed Workers' Centres. Hence, my enthusiasm to get involved in this debate.

Let's be clear. The many attacks on people who find themselves unemployed, with a health condition or disability – you heard of many attacks this morning in the debate – are not there aimed purely at people claiming benefits, but are geared to make unemployment and dealing with the statutory agencies so unpalatable that workers will accept any lousy working conditions, any part-time, temporary, casual, zero-hours, low-paid shit "Mc" job. But worse still than that – you will know this from your own workplaces – those who are often spitting venom about benefit claimants are those very same low-paid workers. The reasons for this situation are very complex, but what is clear is that the trade union Movement needs to develop clear messages to our members and the wider public outlining a vision of what our future welfare system should look like. If we don't, we can be sure that – it grieves me to say this – regardless of the outcome of the next general election, the direction of travel on welfare issues will continue with the further dismantling of the welfare system, cheered on by the Tory press and politicians who are trapped by public opinion, because what Rachel Reeves did not tell you is the reason why they supported the benefit cap is because they are afraid of being portrayed as the party of the unemployed and the benefit scrounger. That's why they supported the benefit cap. So let's make the development of this fairer welfare system a key task in the coming year. We are very good at saying what we are against.

There are lots of motions saying what we are against on this agenda, but we are not so clear about saying what we are for. We need to be supporting a dignified welfare system based on full employment. Let's make that the real challenge for this coming year. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Is there anyone else who wants to speak? (*No response*) In that case, I call Kath Slater on behalf of the CEC.

SIS. K. SLATER (CEC, Commercial Services): Congress, the CEC is supporting Motions 255 and 264 with the following qualifications. Firstly, on Motion 255, on Social Security Benefits, the detailed motion gives us a background to the problem. We support the unfair criterion assessment of disability in line with Motions 295 and 296 from Congress 2013, and it is existing policy to call for the Welfare Reform Act to be repealed. However, we are unsure as to what the call for an independent assessment would achieve as there are many worthy organisations looking at the impact of these cuts, such as the Child Poverty Action Group, CLASS and TUC. This assessment will cost much-needed money, which could be better spent on reforms or campaigns.

Moving on to Motion 264, again, we support the main thrust of the motion, which highlights the problems faced by young people. However, the qualification is that the motion calls for guaranteed jobs and a government-run and regulated apprenticeship scheme, which are difficult to achieve under this Government, but we will continue to press the Labour Party to honour their Jobs Guarantee Scheme for the young employed if they win the 2015 election. Congress, please support Motions 255 and 264 with these qualifications.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, will Yorkshire & North Derbyshire accept the qualification on Motions 255 and 264? (*Agreed*) Thank you very much. I will now move to the vote on Motions 255, 256, 257, 259, 260, 262, 263, 264, 264, 266, 272 and Composites 27 and 28. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Motion 255 was CARRIED.

Motion 256 was CARRIED.

Motion 257 was CARRIED.

Motion 259 was CARRIED.

Motion 260 was CARRIED.

Motion 262 was CARRIED.

Motion 263 was CARRIED.

Motion 264 was CARRIED.

Motion 265 was CARRIED.

Motion 266 was CARRIED.

Motion 272 was CARRIED.

Composite Motion 27 was CARRIED.

Composite Motion 28 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now ask Southern Region to move Emergency Motion 2: Withdrawal of the Independent Living Fund (ILF)

WITHDRAWAL OF THE INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND (ILF)

EMERGENCY MOTION NO. 2

This Congress is extremely concerned that recipients of the Independent Living Fund (ILF) support payments have in the last few weeks, been notified that the scheme will be closing and they will no longer receive the payments that they rely on to maintain their independence.

The ILF scheme currently provides financial support to the 17,500 most severely disabled people in the UK staying in the community rather than going into residential care.

For the last few years there has been widespread uncertainty over the future of the fund, with the ILF recipients hearing first it would be closed, then the Appeal Court outcome saying the decision had been unlawful and then again in the last few weeks being told it will close.

This is despite the Court of Appeal's three judges unanimously ruled that the Department for Work and Pensions had acted unlawfully in taking the original decision in December 2012 without complying with its duty under the Equality Act (2010). The Ministers have ignored this and will close the fund anyway.

Congress instructs the CEC to do all in its power to save our disabled people from this vicious attack by the government.

BRANCH S69 SECAMB
Southern Region

(Carried)

SIS. A. WIJE (Southern): Congress, I am moving Emergency Motion 2 regarding the withdrawal of the Independent Living Fund.

The Independent Living Fund, which has been in existence since 1988, operates in partnership with local authorities to divide and provide joint care packages or services and direct payments to assist disabled persons to lead independent lives, away from full-time residential care and as fully as possible in the community. The aim of the ILF was to combat social exclusion on the grounds of disability. ILF helps severely disabled people to hire personal assistants, to live in their own homes rather than exist with clocked-time care slots or go into residential care. Despite the value and the importance of the ILF, after public consultation in 2012, the Government confirmed that the ILF would be closed. Various claimants sought a judicial review of this decision, mainly on two points; firstly, that the Government consultation to close the fund was inadequate and, secondly, that the Government had failed to have due regard to the equality duty under the Equality Act in coming to their decision. The case went all the way to the Court of Appeal, where the claimants won. The Court of Appeal said: "There is simply not the evidence to demonstrate that a focused regard was had to the potentially very grave impact upon individuals."

Notwithstanding that the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government's decision to close the fund was unlawful, in the last few weeks recipients of the ILF have been notified that the scheme will be closing regardless. The greatest concerns of current recipients of the ILF is that falling back on local authority funding, which is, in any event, being stripped to the bone, is not sufficient to maintain independence. Yet again the Government are targeting the most vulnerable in society, those with the fewest options open to them.

Congress should do all in its power to save disabled people from this latest attack by the Government. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I call the seconder.

BRO. C. WATTS (Southern): Congress, I second the emergency motion: Withdrawal of the ILF.

Am I proud to be standing at this rostrum to second this emergency motion? I certainly am not. I think this is an absolute disgrace in a country that is one of the richest countries in the world, we are in the 21st

century and we are having to stand up on a podium and talk about motions like this. It is an absolutely disgrace! This just adds to the list of the Government's shame: the bedroom tax, the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance, which again was meant to help the poorest children from the poorest families; ATOS; the closure of 500 SureStart centres; ruthless cuts to key public services, and the list just goes on and on, and it keeps going on and on. This is on a backdrop of tax cuts to millionaires and boardroom wages increasing, while our wages have gone down by 20% over the last four years, and bankers' bonuses out of control.

"We are all in this together". My arse! When times are tough a nation is judged on its actions towards the most vulnerable in society, and this Government's actions has meant that our nation has been found wanting. I don't know if it is just me, but with policies coming through like *this*, is it not the case that the Labour Party manifesto should just be writing itself. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? (*No response*) Okay. Can I now put Emergency Motion 2 to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Emergency Motion No. 2 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now call the movers of Motion 137 – Keep May Day, and Motion 138 – 'No' To A 'Margaret Thatcher Day'.

KEEP MAY DAY MOTION 137

137. KEEP MAY DAY

This Conference believes that the May Day Bank Holiday is a celebration of international workers' day and should retain this status.

We therefore instruct the CEC to lobby the relevant bodies and the Labour Party to keep the status quo regarding May Day Bank Holiday.

GMB MID LINGS BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

BRO. J. CLARKE (Midland & East Coast): President and Congress, I move Motion 137 – Keep May Day. International Workers' Day or May Day has its roots in history, right back to 1889, a date when this great Union started. The reason for this motion, Congress, is that the Tories have again, as John Major did in the 1990s, talked about moving May Day till later in the year. What do they know, and what do they have in common with working people? Nothing. Let me tell you, Congress, they are wrong. It's our day, a celebration of international solidarity of all working people, worldwide. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Seconder?

SIS. K. OKRA (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am seconding Motion 137 – Keep May Day. President and delegates, May Day has been both a national and international tradition, unifying people of all cultures, classes and creeds across the nations, in particular for working people, as it is taken as both a celebration of workers' achievements and skills by working together as well as a public holiday.

In the UK, in England and Wales especially, May Day has had a long tradition in marking the seasons, the beginning of the summer and celebrated with traditional May Pole dances, feasting and, at times, wild celebrations, including drinking etc, showing connections to its original pagan roots. However, it was also appropriated by churches and various parishes around the UK to seal community and the village life, and it was a centre of village celebrations.

International May Day is more of a solidarity event, celebrated historically by trade unions, socialists, communists and workers' organisations across the globe as a symbol of what brings all working people – men, women, colour, religion, creed, sexuality, able bodied and disabled – together celebrate the success of working people, to seal their unity, and remember that the sacrifices that people have made and continue to make for a better future for all the peoples of the world. It is for that reason that May Day needs to be continued to be celebrated, not just as a footnote in history but as a reminder that unity is our strength and that we can all come together to be able to create that better future. By working collectively and celebrating May Day, we may devise new ways of doing so. Thank you. (*Applause*)

'NO' TO A 'MARGARET THATCHER DAY' MOTION 138

138. 'NO' TO A 'MARGARET THATCHER DAY'

This Conference calls for the proposal put forward by a group of Tory MPs to change the August Bank Holiday day to 'Margaret Thatcher Day' to be stopped.

ANWICK & MID Lincs COMMUNITY BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

BRO. M. RALSTON (Midland & East Coast): President and Congress, I move Motion 138. When I looked at this motion, I thought it might be a hard sell but I'll give it a go. Tory MPs have proposed to rename the August Bank Holiday to "Margaret Thatcher Day", which must be stopped.

Where to begin? When I was 15 years old, when Maggie Thatcher *The Milk Snatcher* came to power, this is my response to her first speech on the steps of No. 10: "Where there be discord, may we bring harmony." The race and Poll Tax riots of the 1980s, I remember. I was there. "Where there is error, may we bring truth." The miners' strike and the destruction of a generation and their communities, I remember. I was there. "Where there is doubt, may we bring faith." Yes, faith in money and faith in greed. I remember. I was there. Finally, "Where there is despair, may we bring hope." As one of the unemployed millions, I was told that it was a price worth paying for progress. I remember. I was there. I bear witness for the lost generation who never had an opportunity to work and be trapped in a spiral of poverty. Thatcher never earned this honour and it would only add insult to injury. We must stop this disgraceful idea now. I will be the first to sign a petition. Who will sign with me? Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. M. SHORT (Midland & East Coast): President, I second Motion 138. How do I follow that? 'No' to a 'Margaret Thatcher Day'. What a bitch! I shouldn't have said that, should I, but that's what I'm thinking.

President and Congress, the memory of Maggie Thatcher does not deserve a day named after her. August Bank Holiday is a working persons' day. After what she did to the steel works, bloody hells bells! Look at what she did to the miners, shipbuilders, car manufacturers, dockers and the National Health Service, and they want to call a day after her! Fuck me! (*Cheers*) Anyhow, she sold off the crown jewels of this country; the gas, the electric, the water, the railways, BT, all by de-nationalisation. Did it make it any better? Did it, bollocks! I am sorry about this language, but she really winds me up. I'll tell you what. I

blame you lot down south here for letting them do a bloody funeral through the streets of London. Why didn't you just block it and set fire to the bloody thing? Jesus Christ! (*Applause and cheers*) They want to call a day after her. Don't let it happen, please. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on Motions 137 or 138?

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): Congress, I am speaking in support of Motion 138. President and comrades, when I first saw this motion on the agenda my members, family and friends thought that I must be ill, because I said that my intention was actually to oppose the motion. They all know how much I hate the bitch, but I thought "Why not have a Thatcher Day?" Let's have a day to remember what she did to the working class. Let's have a day to remember how she shafted the miners. Let's have a day to remember how she sold off our utilities, and let's have a day to remember her anti-trade union laws. I could go on and on, but you know the history. I realised that she gave us so many happy memories, not! So we don't need a Thatcher Day to remember what the evil witch did to us, because we will never forget. As the unionists, we will ensure people do not forget as neither will the next generation nor the next generation nor the one after that. So let's all tell the Conservative Party to stick their Thatcher Day right up their fat Tory.... I'm sorry as I nearly had a Ricky Tomlinson moment there. What we should have is a bank holiday to commemorate our working class heroes, who made the real difference to this country. Let's have a day to remember the strength of Tom and Kitty Higdon, who led the Burston School strike, the longest strike in British history, the centenary of which we celebrate this year, or how about a day to remember the courage of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, condemned and transported just for forming a union? Here is one I think we can all agree on. Let's have Will Thorne Day. (*Applause*) Let's have a day to celebrate our forward-thinking and inspirational founder. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, I am now going to put Motions 137 and 138 to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Motion 137 was CARRIED.

Motion 138 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to item 2: Political: Labour Party, and I call the movers of Motions 139, 140 and 141.

POLITICAL: LABOUR PARTY LABOUR PARTY FUNDING MOTION 139

139. LABOUR PARTY FUNDING

Congress notes the decision taken by the CEC to significantly reduce funding to the labour Party. Whilst we recognise that this decision was taken with great reluctance, we believe it was entirely correct, given the direction the Labour Party is now travelling in. The current Labour leadership appear to have forgotten why the Labour Party was established. It was established to give a voice to working people in Parliament and to carry out policies that would benefit the majority and not the few rich and privileged.

The current Labour leadership wish to push Labour into the centre ground formerly occupied by the Lib Dems, who have now shifted to the right. This is a cynical attempt by career politicians desperate for power who believe ordinary people will still vote Labour because there is nowhere else to go.

The move to the centre is designed to attract the disillusioned middle class voter, abandoning the principles on which Labour was founded.

If working people are to have any hope of a decent future for themselves and their families, Labour has to fight the next election on policies that will address the concerns and needs of the majority.

Congress calls for a radical manifesto which should include the following:

1. Return to public ownership Water, Gas and Electricity
2. End privatisation of the NHS
3. Introduce a living wage through legislation
4. End zero hours contracts and introduce employment rights for all from day one.
5. Increase the tax rate for the rich and close the loopholes in the tax system which allows companies and millionaires to avoid billions in tax.

Congress agrees that unless the Labour Party adopts these measures as part of its general election manifesto, all funding will be withheld, with the exception of affiliation fees.

L33 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Lost)

BRO. I. LOWES (North West & Irish): Congress, I move Motion 139 – Labour Party Funding. The Labour Party was founded in 1900. It was formed by the trade unions and socialist parties. It was set up in order to give working people a voice in Parliament and to challenge the Liberals and Tories who only spoke for a minority in society. In 1918 the Labour Party adopted Clause 4, which set out the values and objectives of the Party, to take into public ownership, under democratic control, the means of production, distribution and exchange, and to run society for the benefit of the many, not the few. Clause 4, for the Labour Party's constitution, is the same as Clause 2 of our own Union's constitution, which still exists today. Sadly, Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution was abandoned in 1995 by Tony Blair and the architects of New Labour. It was an act of betrayal of the principles that the Labour Party was founded on, and which turned the Labour Party away from socialist values into a social-democratic party, which was similar to the party which the Gang of Four – Bill Rodgers, David Owen, Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins – founded in 1981. In 1990 the SDP merged with the Liberal Party creating the Liberal Democrats. Since 1995 we have seen the Labour Party move further to the right under the Blair and Brown Governments. The gap between rich and poor has widened through privatisation of public services and the de-regulation of banks, which paved the way for the economic crisis that we are all paying for now. Has the current Labour Party leadership not learnt anything from the mistakes of Blair and Brown? Absolutely not.

I understand that Ed is coming to speak to us on Thursday, and he will probably tell us that a Labour Government will abolish zero-hours contracts, and everyone will give him a clap, but what he won't tell you is the way in which Labour intends to do it. You have to be working on a zero-hours contract for between six and 12 months and then you can demand fixed hours. What will happen is that employers will simply sack people before that date and employ others to replace them on zero hours. You can't go to a tribunal unless you have been working for two years, and Labour's got no intentions of reversing Tory employment legislation. Ed will probably tell us that the Labour Party will introduce a Living Wage, and we will clap again. What he won't tell you is that a Labour Government won't legislate for it. He wants employers to do it voluntarily. How naïve is that? Does he not know that in a capitalist free market the good employer is undercut by the bad employer, and the bad employer is undercut by the even-worse employer?

Congress, the time has come for us as a Union, clearly, to spell out to the Labour Party what we expect from the Party when in government. We expect gas, water and electricity to be returned to public ownership. All these things are GMB policy. They are not revolutionary or extreme. Support for the

Labour Party cannot be conditional. That is the price of our continued support. They have taken our money for too long. Enough is enough. No more. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Seconder?

BRO. J. KEIGHT (North West & Irish): Congress, I second Motion 139. Congress, the last time I spoke on this subject was in support of the same motion number at the Brighton Congress in 2012, Motion 139. I posed the question: when is the Labour Party going to support this Union's policies and aspirations with the renationalisation of the railways, the utility companies, the repeal of anti-trade union laws, introduce policies to reverse the privatisation of the National Health Service, introduce an increase in tax rates for millionaires and billionaires in this country, and when are we going to see a Labour Party introduce a robust policy for corporate tax avoidance, a policy to end zero-hours contracts and employment rights for all from day one of employment?

At the 2012 Congress and, as a result of that motion, our General Secretary assured Congress that he would address the issue of political funding to the Labour Party if they failed to deliver on the aspirations and core values of this trade union. The General Secretary said: "There will be no more money if the Labour Party did not recognise that this Union expects due consideration and delivery on certain GMB policies." I said at the 2012 Congress that there are no consequences to the leadership of the Labour Party if they fail to deliver. It is two years on and the Labour Party has not changed. They are still taking our money and they have given us nothing in return. It is now time for this Union to stop all funding of the Labour Party, with the exception of affiliation fees, until we see the Labour Party deliver a general election manifesto with our aspirations as a Union. I ask Congress to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 140, to be moved by Yorkshire & North Derbyshire.

FULL EMPLOYMENT MOTION 140

140. FULL EMPLOYMENT

This Conference calls on the Labour Party to adopt a commitment to full employment as the main plank of its economic policy for the 2015 manifesto.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

BRO. S. WOODHOUSE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 140 – Full Employment. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I call upon Congress to support this motion asking the Labour Party to commit to adopting the policy of full employment in their 2015 General Election manifesto. We must never forget that a radical Labour Government was elected in 1945, a socialist government, which achieved great things, including the National Health Service in 1948. Underpinning Clement Attlee's government was the policy of full employment. What has changed? Why must austerity be our priority? Austerity is destroying jobs that the Labour Party must break free from this deeply unpopular policy. The 1945 Labour Government put people back to work, despite the massive debt caused by the Second World War. The Government created jobs by nationalising public utilities: coal, gas, steel and the setting up of the NHS. This put people back into work.

What is needed now is courage. The same old capitalist model is broken. Jobs must be a priority for a Labour Government. When we talk about full employment we are talking about working towards the

goal of eliminating unemployment in this country. Unemployment is a scourge of this country, especially the disgrace of youth unemployment. There are a massive 868,000 young people, between the ages of 16 – 24, who have been thrown on the scrapheap. Full employment should be a no-brainer, not a pipedream. Full employment would reduce social security spending, bring in vital tax revenues and would also reduce employers exploiting the workforce. I wonder if the residents of Nottingham are aware that 1,700 people applied for a mere eight jobs at Costa Coffee? This is a strong reflection of the current unemployment situation in this country.

In the Labour Party's 2010 manifesto they supported full employment. Therefore, I ask them to include the same commitment in their 2015 manifesto. Remember the spirit of 1945, Mr Miliband. Full employment must be for flagship policy. This means Government intervention. You must be bold and anything less you will fail. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. Secunder?

SIS. A. MORRELL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 140. The GMB must wake up the Labour Party and show them the way and the benefits of full employment, benefits that won't cost the public purse but will increase the public purse with more workers paying into the PAYE system, thus feeding into our country's economy. With workers paying into National Insurance contributions, this can only make our NHS stronger. The NHS was created by a radical Labour Government of 1945 at what was one of the worst times in our history, just after the Second World War. It is now the 21st century and where is our Joseph Rowntree? Mr Miliband, you say that you are the Labour Party, the Party for the worker. Now is the time to prove this. We, the GMB, ask you to make full employment part of your 2015 manifesto for the general election. Lead us not into temptation. Lead us into full employment. I second. It's a no-brainer. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call Motion 141.

LIVE LIVESTOCK MOVEMENTS MOTION 141

141. LIVE LIVESTOCK MOVEMENTS

Congress asks the CEC to seek to have included in the Labour Party Manifesto for the next generation "a total ban on the movement of live livestock to Europe", if at all possible.

ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. C. HOLLAND (London): Congress, I move Motion 141. I am drawing your attention to a barbaric act that is still going on in the 21st century. I was horrified to be on the M25, and I do stress that I was only a passenger, in a car when I looked out next to me and saw what can only be described as a "cattle wagon", but with sheep. They were almost climbing over each other. It was an Italian lorry, so either it was travelling to Italy or coming to the UK with its cargo. Why is this still happening? Why are these poor animals being cruelly moved about? Why not use local products so what we grow we can use? "Locally" means local. This is an argument that is to be had. Why should man treat animals in this way? They have no free will. It is cruel and I am fed up with this. It is still happening.

I have a daughter, Shelley, who I am so proud of. Her values say that she will not live her life at the expense of animals. She is a vegan and is committed. Yes, she eats well. She doesn't only eat salad. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. Seconder?

BRO. H. SMITH (London): Congress, I second Motion 141 – the transportation of livestock. I will start off with the Executive summary response to this atrocious activity. Each year around six million farm animals – cattle, sheep, pigs and horses – are transported huge distances across Europe, some for slaughter, others for further fattening. Many of these journeys involve extensive suffering and they take over 30 hours, the worse over 70 hours. Much of the suffering that is inherent in long journeys could be prevented by substantially reducing the journey times. Animals should be slaughtered as near as possible to the farm that reared them, and the meat could then be transported to wherever it is needed. Animals should also be fattened on or near the farm of birth.

To convert those principles into practical reality, a maximum overall limit of eight hours should be placed on journeys to the slaughterhouse or for further fattening. The suffering involved shows that animals are regularly packed in over-crowded trucks, and then are often given no or far little food, water or rest. As the journey progresses, the animals become increasingly exhausted, dehydrated and stressed. Some get injured. Many journeys take place in extreme summer heat in overcrowded trucks with inadequate ventilation, combined with water deprivation and the sheer length of the journeys. This leads to great suffering to animals and they become utterly worn out. In the worst case, many die.

As a vegetarian, as someone who grew up around meat, my parents had basic livestock, which we cherished as food sources. In general, when we think of food, come Christmas, be kind and gentle to the turkey. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate in this section? (*No response*) In that case, I will call Paul Kenny.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, seeking withdrawal of Motion 139, and with a qualification on 141. I will just deal with Motion 141 quickly. The motion is right, the speakers were right but, as I suspect, both Cath and the branch already knew, because the clue is contained within the motion itself, the EU rules actually preclude a Labour Party doing from what has been required. That does not mean to say that it should not be done and it does not mean to say that we should not campaign for it, but it would be wrong to say that without that qualification, there is a not big hurdle to get over. The conditions that Cath and Henry described were absolutely right. They are appalling and we have an obligation as a Movement to try and change that. With that qualification only, at the moment it is just not possible, but not without any suggestion that we won't try, Cath.

Turning to Motion 139, I am really grateful and so is the CEC for the motion's kind support, actually, for the decision by the CEC to reduce our affiliation by £1 million. Jeff, if you think that reducing the affiliation money to the Labour Party is nothing that we have done since you last spoke, then I don't know what I can do to please you. In terms of the issues, of course, we are forcing people to listen to us. Of course we are campaigning. Of course we are arguing. The issues contained within the resolution itself, I don't think have anything but wholehearted support. Of course, we support calls for public ownership, protecting the NHS, a Living Wage, employment rights and a fair tax system. Blimey, the amount of speeches I have made publicly and privately about all of those issues in the last five years would pay for the halls that we are in!

The idea that we hang everything that we have built on the basis of getting this into the manifesto or we pull out is, I am afraid, just asking for us to stand back and let the Tories win. I am sorry, but that is just a dose of reality that we have to look at, honestly. Get angry, yes. Of course, you have every right to be angry. Getting organised is what we do. Don't rely on everybody else to do it for us. We do it for

ourselves. We passed a strategy in this Union a few years ago because we said that New Labour, as Ian knows, was completely unreflective of the views not just of this Movement but of working people in general. We actually did a real day's work when we did that, and we set about building a political organisation in the Union for one purpose, and that purpose was to get people who had real working-life experience selected in winnable seats. We have actually gone out and done that. We haven't shouted about it. We haven't felt the need to go and tell everybody how great we are, but we've just been quietly getting on with it, changing the face of the Labour Party where it matters. It is not a question of hitting the leadership but changing the make-up of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

New Labour is dead. It is absolutely dead as the Norwegian Blue. Even Progress, who you will remember we had quite a discussion about a few years ago, has finally admitted that New Labour is no longer a label that they wish to be associated with, so it is official. The relatives have actually identified the corpse at long last. So the truth of the matter is that we have changed the landscape, but it is a battle. I am not one who believes that you should give up on a battle halfway through and look for a reason to cop out.

You see, Jeff and Ian, this is what the impact will be. If we do what this motion says, let me tell you who we will hurt. It won't be the leadership of the Labour Party. It will be those candidates who we've worked so hard over the last 18 months to get into those winnable seats, because what this motion will do is it will stop us supporting them from getting elected. *(Applause)* If you really want to change things, and I think it is upon us as a union to change things. I don't go round there hoping that, somehow, they are going to sprinkle a bag of magic dust and make my life better. We change things ourselves. That's what trade unionists do. That's what we agreed to do as an organisation a couple of years ago. We have spent a lot of time, effort and organisation in doing that. If we are going to give up right now, then all of that time and effort has been absolutely worthless. If we don't change the make-up, outlook and philosophy of the Labour Party, then who will? And walking away will do what, exactly? Will someone please tell me what is riding in if we don't self-organise ourselves? Frankly, I don't see why I should walk away from my Labour Party. I know the people who should be departing the Labour Party and it should be repopulated with people it was intended to be populated by! *(Applause)* Honestly, that's why the motion doesn't fit. I understand its anger.

Believe me, I could have hit a few people in my time with the frustration I'm suffering when they don't listen, but that doesn't make me stop. When an employer wouldn't give us justice or give us a pay rise, I didn't say, "Well, I'm not coming in here any more." You just keep going. You keep going until you get the goals that you are going to get. You don't give up. That's the easy way out. What we've done in the last couple of years, effectively, is to arrive at a position where we've got a real chance, for the first time in my lifetime, of actually repopulating the Labour Party in Westminster with a majority of people who have come from a working class background. If you ask them how much their weekly shopping bill was, they would be able to tell you down to the last penny, because most of them have had to string it out year after year in order to feed their family and clothe their kids. Those are the sort of people I want to see in the House of Commons. If you don't want that, support this motion. If not, support the CEC. *(Cheers and applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Ian, do you wish to take up the right to reply?

BRO. I. LOWES: Congress, I am exercising the right to reply. I think I am missing something here, because I don't recall the motion calling for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. We are not talking about walking away. We are talking about holding the Labour Party to account. Does anyone really think that the spivs, the speculators and the snake-oil salesmen who fund the Tory Party would continue funding the Tory Party if the Tory Party didn't deliver policies that were in their interests? *(Applause)* All that we

are saying to the Labour Party is: If you want to continue getting financial and physical support from this Union and its members, we expect something in return. So support the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, does London Region accept the qualification? You do. Thank you. Colleagues, I will move to the vote on Motion 139 – Labour Party Funding. The CEC is asking North Wales & Irish Region to withdraw. Will you? No. Okay. I am going to put it to the vote, then. The CEC was asking for withdrawal. The CEC is now asking you to oppose Motion 139. All those in favour, please show? All those against. That is lost.

Motion 139 FELL.

THE PRESIDENT: I will now take the vote on Motions 140 and 141. As the region has accepted the qualification. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? Carried.

Motion 140 was CARRIED.

Motion 141 was CARRIED

INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: Social Justice

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to item 3: Industrial & Economic Policy. This section involves Motion 105, to be moved by Southern Region; Composite Motion 10, to be moved by Wales & South West, London to second; Motion 108, to be moved by the North West & Irish Region, followed, lastly, by Composite Motion 11, Bankers' Bonuses, to be moved by Southern Region, London to second.

CAPITALISM – NOT WORKING MOTION 105

105. CAPITALISM – NOT WORKING

Congress notes with serious concern the ever widening gap between rich and poor and the recognition that the many are now working ever harder to support a minority of rich elite.

It is accepted, even by some former capitalists, who always believed the principles of capitalism, the market, neo liberalism and individualism were the driving forces of wealth creation, that now we are slaves to the system itself.

In his 2013 Labour Party conference speech, Ed Miliband spoke of the economic tide rising but only the yachts going up. President Obama in a state of the nation address made similar comments to the effect that capitalism was working for an ever shrinking affluent elite while the vast majority of working and middle class people had to fight ever harder just to get by.

Congress recognizes that it maybe one thing to identify a problem, but it is another to solve the issue. The vast majority of the working people of the civilized world have been shocked by the scale of the economic and financial crisis of 2008 and its continuing repercussions. Working people struggle daily with the cost of living crisis, the struggle to make ends meet, the difficulties in trying to live a decent balanced life and raise children in an ever more insecure life.

Congress urges the GMB leadership to work with partners of the labour movement around the world and influence an incoming Labour Government to work similarly with those like-minded governments in other countries to ensure a future where the system works for the majority. We must not be slaves to the capitalist system that only works for a minority of rich and powerful.

Congress recognizes that often challenges and difficulties provide opportunities. The gravity of the economic and financial recession has provided a catalyst and a mood and a belief in working and middle class people that there must be change to stop this ever widening rich – poor gap.

X23 DOVER FERRIES BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. GOODACRE (Southern): Congress, I move Motion 105: Capitalism – Not Working. Colleagues, I do not intend to launch into a three-minute rant against the evils of capitalism. However, since the late '70s capitalism has ceased to work for most of us. The failures of capitalism have been caused by capitalism operating within the paradigms of what's known as "neo-classical", also known as "neo-liberal", economics. This economic ideology is premised on the idea that markets and economic agents should act with little or no intervention from the state. The other twin foundation is that of extreme individualism, that somehow it is good and the economy for individuals to do exactly what they want. Some of us will remember this as monetarism from the 1980s, a failed economic experiment to which the UK was subjected in the 1980s. The current Coalition policies are a continuation of those that caused so much damage in the '80s. We have had a timely reminder this afternoon of exactly the nature and scope of that damage.

As this ideological form of capitalism translates itself into the real world, we are exposed to the consequences. It has damaged the very fabric of our economy and society through botched privatisations, private profit-driven agents in the NHS, which has resulted in screw-ups, and it has also led to mass unemployment. However, the triumph of New Capitalism is the recent banking crisis, a lesson that markets require regulation and that economic agents, business and individuals, do not always act rationally. It took a socialist solution of nationalisation to prevent a collapse of the financial system. It is working people who are still paying the price of capitalism's grand failure.

The most damaging effects of the New Capitalism has been rising levels of inequality. The levels of inequality that we are experiencing are beginning to rival those not seen since the 19th century. Take any indicator you care to, be it personal wealth, income, life expectancy, educational opportunities and sentiments of wellbeing. The good stuff is being increasingly concentrated in a tiny percentile at the top. As we have been reminded or had our noses rubbed in it: "The 1 per cent are winning." Life is getting tougher for most of us. Living standards and incomes are declining or stagnant, at best. Employment is deteriorating materially and qualitatively. The proliferation of part-time working, zero-hours contracts and fewer employment rights add to a sense of insecurity. They undermine our bargaining powers and lead to lower wages.

Whilst many in the middle might feel squeezed, those at the bottom are being absolutely pulverised with levels of absolute and relative poverty rising. The ranks of the working poor swell year after year. This is due in no part to a taxation policy that places a disproportionate burden on those not at the top of the "Well" spectrum. We currently have a taxation system that allows the very wealthy to evade paying their fair share. Capitalism, as it is being practised now, does not work for the vast majority of us, the 99.something per cent. However, this situation is not immutable. There are fairer systems. Between 1945 and 1979 this country and many others actually became fairer. These systems also deliver higher economic growth.

Motion 105 does not call for a revolution. It seeks better and fairer models of what we have. Motion 105 wishes to see the GMB play its central role in promoting this agenda, developing fairer models and influencing future governments to turn this agenda into policies. Congress, please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Seconder? (*The motion was formally seconded from the floor*)
Thank you. Composite 10.

GROWING INEQUALITY AND THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR UNDER THE COALITION GOVERNMENT COMPOSITE MOTION 10

C10. Covering Motions:

106. THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR HAS WIDENED CONSIDERABLY UNDER THE TORY/LIB DEM COALITION GOVERNMENT (*Wales & South West Region*)
107. GROWING INEQUALITY (*London Region*)

GROWING INEQUALITY AND THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR UNDER THE COALITION GOVERNMENT

This Conference notes with great concern that the ever widening earnings gap between rich and poor has widened considerably under the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition Government with 10% of the richest people in the UK owning 90% of the wealth.

This cannot be right, that in the twenty first century rich people are getting richer and the rest are facing uncertainty in employment with zero hours and more draconian employment rights, increasing debt, with charities reporting up to a 44% rise in those people seeking advice on how to make ends meet, and food banks in some areas becoming the fastest growing businesses.

This is the driving force of growing inequality that has been occurring over the last 30 years.

It both explains and justifies Ed Miliband's claim that any economic upturn that may be taking place, is not benefiting the vast majority of the public and also fully justifies the GMB's drive for a living wage.

Consequently Congress believes that the growing wages gap should be central to both the Trade Unions and Labour Party economic propaganda regarding the 2015 General Election and the GMB Living Wage Campaign

We call upon the GMB/Labour Party to campaign for:-

- A fairer graduated taxation system which allows those that can afford to pay more.
- The introduction of the Living Wage across both the Public and Private Sectors.
- The re-introduction of Universal Benefits, which work on the basis of 'you pay in; you get out when you need it'.

Wales & South West Region to Move London Region to Second

(*Carried*)

BRO. N. EVANS (GMB Wales and South West): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, I am moving Composite Motion 10: Growing Inequality and the widening gap between rich and poor the Coalition Government.

President and delegates, back in 1957 Harold MacMillan said at a Tory rally in Bedford that most of our people have never had it so good, attacking what he called the doctrinaire nightmare of socialism. He

said, further: “You will see a state of prosperity in Britain such that people have never had in the history of the country.” A fair description, do you think, of our country? You must be joking. Colleagues, we now live in a country where growing inequality is mainly down to the soaring wages of the rich and super rich, a reduction in the top rate of tax and the erosion of benefits for the poorest. In this country, the gap in earnings between the richest and the poorest in the working-age population has risen from 8 to 1 in 1985 to over 13 to 1 today. Wages are stagnating and the poor are being hit hardest by austerity, while the stock market and top rates of pay are catapulting in the other direction. Britain currently bears the social shame of 1.6 million children living in poverty and consigned to the type of economic and social hardship that belongs to another age.

Congress, there must be a recognition by politicians that a targeted reduction in the gap between the richest and the poorest is absolutely essential to create both a fairer society and to promote economic growth. The wider economic costs of mental illness in England alone is estimated to be £105 billion a year, which includes direct costs of services, lost productivity at work and reduced quality of life. The benefits of a more equal society are obvious and embrace stronger levels of community cohesion, higher trust and better social mobility. Despite the welfare state, this country’s rich and poor live in entirely different worlds. The fact is that those with the greatest need of good healthcare, education, jobs and housing have the worst access to opportunities since the formation of the welfare state.

Today we live in a truly divided Britain, seven decades are the landmark Beveridge Report. Plenty for some, but deprivation for far too many. That’s the sad picture of 21st century Britain. We must press for change to wipe out inequality because the failure to do so will prevent our children and grandchildren from having a future.

This composite motion calls for a fairer tax system, the introduction of the Living Wage policy and universal entitlement to welfare benefits on the basis of need. We are experiencing the social shortcomings of a system that is mainly concerned with creating profits for the richer classes, rather than being based on social values, which is all too obvious. There is a danger that there will be future civil unrest similar to which occurred in London two years ago. Congress, street begging and food scrounging have no place in this country, as the poorest have to resort to such desperate measures. Britain is the fifth richest country in the world, but the gap between the haves and have-nots continues to grow. We must campaign for change before the closed door becomes a completely sealed one. Thank you. (*Applause*)

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

BRO. V. WEST (London): Congress, I second Composite Motion 10. Just over a year ago the *Observer* reported that wealth inequality in this country had grown in the last 15 years. The top 1% have seen their slice of the cake increase from 7% in the mid-1980s to 10% today, whilst the bottom 50% have seen their share drop from 19% to 18%. It put paid to the lie that we are all in this together, but, in reality, when have we ever been all in this together? In 1998 Peter Mandelson famously declared that New Labour was intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich, and under the last Labour Government wealth inequality continued to grow as the stats that I have just quoted show. But maybe, just maybe, the current leaders of the Labour Party do get it. Ed talks about the “squeezed middle” and the “cost-of-living crisis”, because whilst those at the top of the earnings league have avoided the cost of austerity, at least 50% of the population have not. Those right at the bottom are now reliant on food banks, as we discussed earlier today.

Congress, there is an alternative, an alternative economic strategy based on the Minimum Wage becoming a Living Wage, a strategy based on a progressive tax system with no loopholes for the rich or their companies, a strategy that stops demonising welfare benefit claimants, a strategy that both the

unions and the Labour Party can unite around, a bold and radical strategy, a strategy that reconnects with our lost voters, a strategy for victory in 2015. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I call the movers of Motion 108, North West & Irish Region.

CHAMPIONING SOCIAL VALUE MOTION 108

108. CHAMPIONING SOCIAL VALUE

Congress notes the failure of the current economic system to offer wages to reflect the positive impact of the most essential roles in society, leaving millions in poverty despite serving sometimes working 3 or 4 jobs because supposedly unskilled work is unvalued.

According to neweconomics.org **'for every £1 they are paid, childcare workers generate between £7 and £9.50 worth of benefits to society'**.

Shamefully, **'while collecting salaries of between £500,000 and £10 million, leading City bankers destroy £7 of social value for every pound in value they generate'**.

Late in 2013, Switzerland took the unprecedented step of capping salaries for CEOs in which companies would be legally blocked from paying their highest earners more than their lowest earners' salary in a month.

GMB policy is to campaign for a Living Wage on a political platform. It is also to campaign for a maximum pay differential like the Swiss have adopted

Congress calls on the GMB to take a step further in championing social value in wage negotiations on the ground as well as taking the matter into the heart of British politics.

Congress instructs the GMB to integrate training on wage negotiations around social value of labour into the GMB @ Work framework, to maintain the visibility of the issue through press releases as well as campaigning and lobbying Parliament.

M15 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. S. NICHOLLS (North West & Irish): Congress, I move Motion 108 – Championing Social Value. I am sure that there is somebody out *there* who knows somebody who is suffering financially. I am. There are people out *there* holding two, three even four jobs because, supposedly, unskilled work is unvalued, which is wrong, because every job has a value because every job needs a skill. This is all due to the economic system's failure to offer decent wages.

Last year in Switzerland, however, they introduced a capping system where companies are blocked from paying their higher earners more than their lower earners. The GMB would like to campaign for the Living Wage and to campaign for a pay differential, like they have in Switzerland.

We call on the GMB to take a step further in championing social value in wage negotiations on the ground as well as taking the matter into the heart of British politics. We would like the GMB to introduce training on the negotiation of wages around social value of labour into the GMB@Work framework so that we can maintain the visibility of the issue through press releases on Parliament. Thank you.

(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Samantha. Secunder? *(The motion was formally seconded from the floor)* Thank you.

We now move to Composite 11, Bankers Bonuses, to be moved by Southern Region.

BANKERS BONUSES COMPOSITE MOTION 11

C11. Covering Motions:

- 111. TORIES AND BANKERS BONUS *(Southern Region)*
- 112. BANKERS BONUSES *(London Region)*

BANKERS BONUSES

This conference is disgusted that following the recent worldwide banking crisis the British government are currently taking the EU to court over its proposed bankers bonus cap. This legal action is just another example of how the Tories are on the side of the rich and privileged.

Considering the economic crisis was in part caused by the irresponsible bonus arrangements within the banking sector it is amazing that this government would take such action to defend bankers. Failure should not be rewarded and if we are hearing correctly and we are coming out of recession we know it's only going to be a matter of time before the above inflation bonuses will be given to Bankers once again.

Why we hear that we are climbing out of recession we must not be complacent and remember to cast our minds back to the last few years. Where friends and family have been made redundant, and for many forced to take reductions in their salary just to remain in Employment.

We are absolutely not "all in this together". This union must ensure that this message gets out to the electorate. The Tories are never on the side of working people.

Congress calls on the CEC to lobby the Government regarding Bankers Bonuses.

Southern Region to Move London Region to Second

(Carried)

BRO. R. REEVES (Southern): Congress, I move Composite Motion 11 – Bankers Bonuses. President and delegates, the Tories, what can we expect? They tried to stop the formation of the National Health Services. They failed. Later came the introduction of the Health & Safety at Work Act, when they tried to prevent the Union's safety reps from being part of works safety committees. They failed. A bit later we saw the National Minimum Wage. They tried to stop that happening. They failed. These were major pieces of legislation designed for the benefit of everyone, not just the few very rich supporters of the Tory Party. Now they are in power with their mates, the Liberals, and what do we see? They are going as far as to take the European Union to court to try to overthrow a very reasonable piece of legislation aimed at trying to prevent another world banking crisis by restricting the size of bankers' bonuses. This has resulted in George Osborne stepping in to cap the bonuses that the Royal Bank of Scotland pays their top executives. What a fiasco. They should have accepted the new rules from Europe. Not all of the business

community think that the new rules are wrong. There was a major revolt when Barclays' executives put the bonus proposals to their shareholders, but there is more.

The great Mail robbery has cost taxpayers, you and I, £1 billion, the difference for what Royal Mail shares were sold for and what they are worth now. I can go on but there is no time. There the Tories go again, supporting the very rich and their supporters at the expense of us all, a clear abuse of the public. We should not be surprised. We are, clearly, not in it together. Make it so that they fail again by chucking them out at the next election. Please support this composite motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. I call the seconder.

BRO. G. HARRIS (London): I am seconding Composite Motion 11 – Bankers' Bonuses. I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

In 2007 and 2008 this and other countries throughout the world saw the worse financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It resulted in the threat of the total collapse of large financial institutions, the bail out of banks by national governments and downturns in stock markets around the world. The housing market also suffered, resulting in evictions, foreclosures and prolonged unemployment. The crisis played a significant role in the failure of key business. Declines in consumer wealth was estimated in trillions of US dollars, and we saw a downturn in economic activity leading to the 2008—2012 global recession, contributing to the crisis.

In May 2010 the Tory-led Coalition Government was elected and the story on how the crisis came about and who was to blame changed. The blame was shifted from the bankers to workers, benefit claimants and reckless public spending. We and others exposed this lie and should continue to do so. The crisis wasn't caused by workers, benefit claimants or reckless public spending. It was bankers, with governments too afraid to regulate and bring them to heel. The Government continues to resist reasonable measures proposed by the European Union which George Osborne, the Tory Government and their friends in the City of London oppose, which allows banks, like Barclays, after making a £240 million profit, to balance bonuses with redundancies. Bankers and the Coalition have learnt nothing from their past mistakes and ignore the claim that we're all in it together.

When our members' pay, terms and conditions remain static, why can't the same apply to bankers, those in the financial sectors and MPs? An incoming Labour Government must learn from the mistakes of light-touch regulations. The regulation of markets is a necessity for a more successful and equal economy. Come the next election, let's make sure that the next Government brings bankers to heel. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gary. Does anyone wish to speak in the debate? *(No response)* In that case, I now move to the vote. The CEC are accepting Motions 105, Composite Motion 10, Motion 108 and Composite 11. There is no CEC speaker, so I will come to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Any against? Carried.

Motion 105 was CARRIED.

Composite Motion 10 was CARRIED.

Motion 108 was CARRIED.

Composite Motion 11 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 4: Industrial & Economic Policy: Taxation and General. This section includes Motions 113, 115, 121 and 122. Motion 113 is to be moved by Yorkshire Region;

Motion 115 is to be moved by Yorkshire Region; Motion 121 is to be moved by Birmingham & West Midlands Region, and Motion 122 is to be moved by Northern Region.

**INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: TAXATION & GENERAL
TAX AVOIDANCE HMRC FUNDING
MOTION 113**

113. TAX AVOIDANCE HMRC FUNDING

This Conference notes that HMRC calculates that up to £32 billion per year is lost through tax evasion and avoidance by companies and individuals. This conference calls on a future Labour Government to increase resources of the HMRC to take on large scale tax avoidance and evasion including closing tax avoidance areas under the control of the UK government such as Isle of Man, Channel Islands, and seeking agreement from the EU and other international parties to reform tax havens.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

BRO. M. HINCHLIFFE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am from the Tour de France county of Yorkshire, and I am moving Motion 113 – Tax Avoidance.

I have an apology to make before I start from Percy, because Mary was looking for him yesterday but, unfortunately, he had to attend some pre-jump training in Hooter's Bar.

I am a first-time speaker this year. *(Applause)* I need a bit of audience participation first, so I would like you to put your hands up if you would like to pay less tax. Come on. I'm not asking you to vote UKIP. So there is a majority in the room who would like to pay less tax, but as trade unionists we believe in contributing to a central fund to pay for the essentials in society, such as hospitals, schools and support for the vulnerable and weak. There is a group of people in our society who think it is okay not to pay their fair share, and these people can be divided into two sub-groups: firstly, the evaders. These are the criminal element, and they will go out of their way to pay no tax at all. They are good, dishonest criminals. Secondly, there are the avoiders. These are a group of people – I'm going to call them "Cameron's cronies" – who think it is okay to employ individuals to come up with schemes to dodge tax. This, at present, is a legal loophole which needs plugging without delay. I do not wish to name any names, but it was interesting to see the contrasting opinions given by Dave on the two individuals who made the headlines recently. When Jimmy Carr was exposed, a Labour supporter, it was as though he was the Son of Satan, and he was lamblasted by the Prime Minister. But when Barlow's name came up – I am not taking about Ken or Peter there – he was almost given an easy payment plan.

The HMRC has calculated that £32 billion a year is lost to these fraudsters. How many hospitals, schools or football teams could we buy? This conference calls on Labour Government, which, hopefully, will be returned to power next year, to increase the resources of the HMRC to launch a full-scale assault on both the evaders and the avoiders, and also to close down tax havens that we control within our borders. In years gone by, the older ones in the audience will remember that we used to have a Sheriff in this great City of Nottingham, who delighted in stealing from the poor and keeping it for himself. These modern-day parasites are no better. Support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Michael. I call the seconder. *(The motion was formally seconded from the floor)* I call Motion 115, to be moved by Yorkshire.

PROGRESSIVE TAX SYSTEM MOTION 115

115. PROGRESSIVE TAX SYSTEM

This Conference notes the effect of the Con-Dem “austerity” measures on working people and those on benefits. The burden has fallen disproportionately on these sections of the population whilst those on higher incomes have received a tax cut. This conference believes that the deficit cannot be filled by cuts alone and that a more progressive tax system should be used to increase Govt revenue. This should include an increase in the higher rate of taxation to at least 50% raising approx. £3bn. We call upon the Labour Party to scrutinise and debate other tax measures.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

SIS. M. GRIFFITHS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am a first-time speaker and a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* I move Motion 115 for a progressive tax system. I have three main points to make: austerity measures, the burden on working people and the burden on those on benefits; the current tax cuts for the top earners, and the suggestion of a progressive tax system.

With the current Government’s austerity measures, we have seen the burden fall disproportionately on those in society with the least to give. All over the news I see families – hardworking people – struggling to provide basic amenities and being denied fundamental rights that this greedy Government and its pals are denying ordinary working class people. I must also point out that it is not just the unemployed and low-paid workers who are affected by the aggressive taxation by this Government. Some of my members and colleagues, skilled engineers, are struggling to pay their bills and to put food on the table. The rise of food banks and fuel poverty only goes to highlight the effects of this.

The vulnerable are unable to keep warm in the cold. What is being done about this? How is it right, especially when you see the top earners in this country receiving tax breaks? This leads me to ask the question why and how in times of austerity, could this notion have ever been considered reasonable, practical and, subsequently, implemented? It is a disgrace, Congress, and I ask you to look at this and speak out against this injustice. I believe that the deficit cannot be paid off by cuts alone. Since 1979 we have seen a move away from direct to indirect taxation, like VAT, whereas a more progressive tax system should be introduced to increase Government revenue. This should include an increase in the higher rate of taxation to at least 50%, which will raise approximately £3 billion. Lowering the tax brackets is not the answer here. Let’s have those at the top paying their fair share.

I, therefore, call upon the next Labour Government to scrutinise and debate other tax measures and possibilities like this to reduce the deficit to equal this imbalance by shifting the burden proportionately on those in society that can make a real difference. Let us see an end to developments such as the bedroom tax and welcome an ivory-tower tax. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Monica. Secunder?

BRO. J. STEVENSON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I have nothing to say -- for once and for me, that’s amazing -- apart from this. When a young person gets up with so much passion: brilliant! Finally, he’s after your job.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I call Motion 121, to be moved by Birmingham.

BORROWING MONEY TO PURCHASE A COMPANY MOTION 121

121. BORROWING MONEY TO PURCHASE A COMPANY

This Conference is concerned about the practice by both individuals and organisations when intending to purchase a business of raising a loan on the asset of the company that they intend to purchase. This has the effect of saddling that business with debts that in a lot of cases are unsustainable putting jobs of working people at risk; the equity which may be owned by our members or the public to any investment they may have in occupational or private pension schemes in that company.

Conference therefore instructs the CEC to start a campaign mustering support to amend legislation that makes the practice of borrowing money to purchase a company or business using that company or business as the asset illegal.

W50 WELLINGTON BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. BOULD (Birmingham & West Midlands) Congress, I am moving Motion 121 – Borrowing Money to Purchase a Company. Congress, in moving this motion, it is important to put on record the work already done during the past eight years by the Union to draw attention to abuse and dangers of leverage/private equity. The motion raises again the spectre and the practice most common, for example, in the purchase of football clubs, and it is widespread across business, namely, borrowing money to purchase companies. It is a practice where, either a company or an individual wishing to buy a business, instead of using their own money raises a loan based on the assets of the club or company they intend to purchase. This leaves the club or company with a massive debt that makes trading within the company or the club the responsibility of those who buy it themselves. This situation is not really justifiable because it leaves club members, employees, customers and everybody else who may be a debtor at severe risk in the future. The practice that raises money in this way should be made illegal. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, very much. Seconder? *(The motion was formally seconded from the floor)*
We now come to Motion 122.

HEDGE FUNDS MOTION 122

122. HEDGE FUNDS

Congress absolutely deplores the capture of the Co-operative Bank by US hedge funds. Congress notes that the bank has mutual, ethical and collective principles which are at odds with the motives in this takeover. Congress also notes that the collapse of the Bank was caused by the catastrophic business judgements of the previous management. Congress further notes that it is the workforce which is now paying for these disastrous errors and calls on the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills to exercise his powers under section 76 of the Companies Act to require the bank's new board to outline a plan to return the Co-operative to more democratic control within a fixed timescale.

Z26 MIDDLESBROUGH MANUFACTURING BRANCH
Northern Region

(Carried)

SIS. A. PENELLUM (Northern): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* The Co-op Bank, once seen as a bastion of good behaviour, has well and truly come crashing down to earth. Let's be very clear. The great and the good in the Labour Party, in particular, have pushed the model of the Co-op as a way of operating. The financial crisis from 2007 onwards should have been a wake-up call to those in high places. When the Co-op Bank took over the Britannia Building Society,

proper checks and balances should have been made. Anyone who knew anything about banking should have picked up that the Britannia Building Society gave out cheap loans and were into commercial lending in a big way. Then, again, Congress, when the Co-op Bank is run by people who know absolutely nothing about how to run a bank, then we can be forgiven for thinking that the Co-op Bank couldn't even run a party in a brewery.

The fact that hedge funds have been brought in to fund the losses in the Co-op Bank tells us all we need to know about the Co-op. The Co-operative model, if it still exists in the Co-op Bank and the wider Co-op Group, is finished.

The GMB has campaigned long and hard for our members who work in Co-op Funeral Services. When Co-op Funeral Services de-recognised us, the writing was on the wall for decent terms and conditions and for treating workers fairly. The Co-op Group has declared losses of £1.5 billion, much of this being because of the Bank. Those directors who are culpable should be dealt with and barred from holding office. Those top managers who were involved, should be investigated. Massive bonuses were paid to Co-op Bank directors and failure was rewarded. Now hedge funds are seen as the answer.

Congress, the Co-op Bank should be re-named. It is no longer a co-operative. The public need protection from parasites who put themselves before others. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Amanda. Secunder?

SIS. K. QUINN (Northern): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* The Reverend Flowers, who was Chairman of the Co-op Bank, knew as much about banking as you or me. Let's be clear and not hide away from the fact that the top brass in the last Labour Government were happy to appoint him. He was a local councillor who wormed his way into the great and the good. The way the Co-op Bank was run shows once again that the authorities have failed in their task of checking what was going on. The losses that have been built up are staggering. The Co-op account holders have been taken for granted. The irony, of course, Congress, is that Lord Myners was brought in to help with sorting the mess out and then walked out on the board. Yet Lord Myners is not entirely blameless for the way he was involved in the running of NatWest. The fact that the Co-op is linked to the Labour Movement means that something must be done. It is not a matter of just moving to Unity Trust, although, clearly, that must be on the radar, but it is whether the bank with the hedge fund backers can ever again be linked to the corporation. It just doesn't work any more. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* In that case, I call Bill Modlock from the CEC.

BRO. B. MODLOCK (CEC, Public Services): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, supporting Motion 121 with a qualification. The CEC had no difficulty in backing the sentiments of this motion. A highly-leveraged buyout can be dangerous for members' jobs. It is often little more than a risky gamble with potentially massive profits to the City spivs. Tax is avoided and scarcely there is hardly ever any benefit to the wider economy. This is mainstream opinion. Everyone now understands the damage done by these huge bets in the private-equity casino.

Colleagues, the reason why this is common knowledge is that your GMB has been campaigning across the media, up and down the country for about 10 years, ever since an ex-officer teamed up with the private-equity sharks to attempt to destroy our members' rights in the AA. He failed, by the way. So to the colleagues calling for the GMB to start a campaign on leverage buyouts and private equity, you are a little late. With that qualification, please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does Birmingham Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) With that, colleagues, can I put Motions 113, 115, 121 and 122 to the vote. Those in favour? Any against? Carried.

Motion 113 was CARRIED.

Motion 115 was CARRIED.

Motion 121 was CARRIED.

Motion 122 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to Industrial & Economic Policy: The Economy, which involves Composite Motion 9, to be moved by Southern and to be seconded by Wales & South West, and Motion 101, to be moved by London Region.

**INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: ECONOMY
THE REAL UK ECONOMY & A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST AUSTERITY
MEASURES
COMPOSITE MOTION 9**

C9. Covering Motions:

100. UK ECONOMY – REALITY (*Southern Region*)

102. NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST AUSTERITY MEASURES (*Wales & South West Region*)

THE REAL UK ECONOMY & A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST AUSTERITY MEASURES

Congress recognizes that with less than a year until the next General Election, the UK electorate must be made aware of the true condition of the economic position. The current Tory led government must not be allowed to con the British public into 'safety first' voting on the belief that the 'tough decisions' are paying off and that we are all on the path of prosperity. The GMB must place all possible reasonable resources into conveying the true picture to the electorate and ensure that all our partners in the wider labour movement are similarly working along the same lines. Cameron, Osborne & Co have dared to go where even Thatcher would not and the future for working class people in this country is unthinkable should the Tories be returned to government.

Congress recognizes that 4 years into the Tory led coalition GDP is less than the 2008 pre financial crisis figure. In terms of production, manufacturing and exports, the figure is substantially less. The apparent / perceived current economic good news is based on an unsustainable 'credit card', debt laden consumer spend and London / South East housing bubble in an unbalanced economy.

Congress deplores the cynical electoral ploy of David Cameron with his interventions into the mortgage and housing markets as represented most recently with the latest government help to buy scheme. The Tory government is creating similar conditions to those which were instrumental in bringing about the financial and banking crisis of 2008 with all the misery that has followed.

Congress is deeply concerned that levels of personal UK debt are reaching the figures of the pre 2008 position. Most worrying is that debt levels prior to 2008 were due in part to lavish spending on high end products / luxury goods / holidays etc, but now debt levels represent the people attempting to maintain their standard of living and fighting to halt the continuous decline in living standards.

Congress cannot accept that perceived good economic news is a result of the tough austerity based, deficit reduction policies of Osborne. Financial belts can only be tightened for so long and similarly the delaying of expenditure on household goods, appliances, cars etc. Congress recognizes that to maintain a living standard purchases have to be made but unfortunately much of this pent up, delayed, consumer led demand is on the basis of increased debt. We are not witnessing sustainable economic growth in the form of growth in manufacturing, production and exports.

Congress accepts that abnormally low interest rates are the sign of an unhealthy, unbalanced economy. Congress is concerned about the prospects for many households in relation to mortgage payments, but believes that a gradual

and steady increase to normal historic levels is essential to reflect a truly sound and sustainable economy and that the disaster of the 2008 crash is finally end. Retired members, pensioners, hard working people with some prudent savings, persons on fixed incomes, pension funds, cannot indefinitely subsidize an unrealistic housing market and others personal debt. The current consumer demand growth is in part the spend of people who see no financial sense in sensible saving as inflation erodes purchasing power. Congress deplores the irresponsibility of the Tories in attempting to create a feel good factor with house price increases that have no connection with underlying economic performance and financial fundamentals.

Congress recognizes that if the GMB in association with the wider labour movement does not make the UK electorate aware of the reality of the economic position of UK plc, we risk the return of a Cameron government, a false economic recovery that peters out soon after 2015 and 5 years of austerity and misery with a sustained attack on working and middle class families.

This Conference calls upon the CEC to actively promote a national campaign, to expose this Con/Lib Dem Government, on their austerity measures, which are damaging to public sector workers, and communities across the country.

Southern Region to Move Wales & South West Region to Second

(Carried)

BRO. P. GOODACRE (Southern): President and Congress, I move Composite Motion 9 – The Real UK Economy & A National Campaign Against Austerity Measures.

Colleagues, the Government were quick to make exaggerated claims from recent GDP figures. Apparently, GDP rose by over 3% annualised in the first quarter of 2014. They take this as proof that their policies are placing the nation on the road to economic recovery. On the evening of the announcement, a smug, pompous Tory grandee declared on Channel 4 News: “Of course, it will be some time before ordinary people feel the benefits.” A more considered examination of statistics lends support to the view of us ordinary people that the economy is not doing so well. Adjusted for inflation, real gross domestic product is still below its pre-crisis level. By comparison, during the four years of Coalition mismanagement, the US economy grew by 7%. Unlike the UK, the USA followed counter-cyclical policies. They did not make cuts too heavily during a recession.

On election, the Con-Dems promised a “march of the makers”, a balanced economic recovery based upon manufacturing and exporting. Looking at indicators such as the widening trade deficit and rising levels of personal debt, this does not seem to be the foundation of the alleged economic recovery. Rather, the alleged economic recovery, such as it exists, is based on consumer consumption based, mainly, on consumer debt. The Con-Dems have been busy recreating the last mess before we have been able to sort out the mess left by the last mess. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Con-Dems’ policies to re-inflate the traditional enemy of balanced growth – the house price bubble. They have done this through taxpayer-backed mortgage guarantee schemes, the so-called Buy-to-Help, and by holding interests rates at historically and artificially low levels. The latter is a source of impoverishment to savers and those on fixed incomes, such as pensioners.

The Coalition also make bold claims regarding their record on job creation. Most of the jobs they have created are low or relatively low paid. 80 per cent of these new jobs pay less than the median wage of £18,000 a year. Many pay below the Living Wage. Add to this the fact that more and more workers face insecurity of zero-hours contracts, with real incomes stagnant or falling, it should come as no surprise that levels of personal debt are rising. Tragically, it is not just re-mortgaging to make major purchases that is

responsible. Millions are forced to take expensive pay-day loans just to survive. Cumulative interest rates lead to trap families in a cycle of debt and despair. The foundations of Britain's recovery, such as it exists, are fragile. Even that famous left-wing body, the Bank of England, has begun to flag up potential risks and warn of the fragility of the economic recovery.

In the run up to the next election our members, and the electorate in general, must be made aware of the true state of the UK economy. They must be made aware of the effects that the Coalition has on them. They must also be made aware of the consequences of a return to Tory power for another four years.

Composite Motion 9 calls upon the GMB to put all reasonable resources into doing this. Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

BRO. R. DANIELS (Wales & South West): Congress, I second Composite Motion 9 – National Campaign Against Austerity Measures. President and Congress, as a local authority worker, I, like hundreds of thousands of others, have experienced the effects of the cuts agenda. The budget reductions made by the Coalition Government, by the Welsh equivalent, continue to impact severely upon jobs and terms and conditions of employment in every local council in Wales. As expensive cuts in public expenditure become wider and deeper, their effects also touch the private sector as general spending power in the economy diminishes. At a time when financial inequality and unfairness is greater than it has been for decades, the divisive policies of Cameron and Clegg continue to cause hardship on a scale which should have no place in modern-day society.

This is, as we have said, many times before, a financial crisis caused by the irresponsibility of big business, unregulated banks and self-increased politicians, a crisis that dramatically harms the weakest and the most vulnerable when £150 billion of revenue is lost every year due to tax evasion, avoidance and inadequate collection systems. In times of austerity, income inequality becomes even greater and division within communities widens. Compassion for the hardest hit tends to lesson. That is why at the individual council level we must campaign strongly for the protection of services of most value to the least well off through the wage structure for employees. We must try to mitigate the more drastic and unfair effects of income imbalance.

In short, the cuts are making life miserable for so many families. People are struggling to pay their bills and to feed their loved ones. That is why it is important for us all as trade unionists and champions of fairness to expose the serious economic and social problems arising out of a period of Government austerity.

Congress, opposition to this class-based attack should be given, involving all trade unions and pressure groups within the wider labour Movement. The GMB has a long history and a proud tradition of campaigning.

One final point. Any government that practises these policies must be replaced by one that will get rid of them. However, Ed and his colleagues cannot be simply different doctors who dispense the same medicine. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Can I now ask London Region to move, Supporting the Fightback against Austerity?

SUPPORTING THE FIGHTBACK AGAINST AUSTERITY MOTION 101

101. SUPPORTING THE FIGHTBACK AGAINST AUSTERITY

Congress notes:

- 1) The Tories' continued austerity drive in huge cuts to public spending, attacks on wages, benefits and more job cuts.
- 2) The Peoples' Assembly met on 22 June 2013 and saw 4000 activists debate the way to build the anti-austerity movement.
- 3) Tens of thousands joined the mass protest against austerity at the Tory Party Conference on 29 September in Manchester called by UNITE, UNISON, and the GMB, and backed by the TUC and other unions.
- 4) The powerful strikes by 2.5million workers on 30 November 2011 and the broad, enthusiastic support by members from many unions for action called by trade union leaders.
- 5) The FBU, NUT, NASUWT, UCU, UNISON and UNITE in Higher education, NAPO probation workers, and legal workers have all taken national strike action since the autumn, while other unions, such as the CWU, have returned big votes for strikes.
- 6) As well as disputes at a national level, 2013 saw important localised strikes. These have included, for example, the victorious action at Hovis in Wigan – where members of BFAWU defeated zero hours contracts – and the unofficial strike by UNISON Social Care Workers in Glasgow, who won reinstatement of a victimised colleague.

Congress believes that:

- 1) We can't simply wait for a Labour Government to end austerity, particularly after Ed Miliband's signed up to Tory spending plans.
- 2) There is an urgent need to build up the strength of trade union organisation across the public and private sectors.
- 3) Disputes that have won victories through striking back have shown it is possible to fight and win.
- 4) Support for the Peoples' Assembly and the big turnout on the 29 September TUC demonstration show that many union members are people affected by the cuts want to organise and resist.

Congress resolves to:

- 1) Support all groups of workers fighting back against the attacks on their wages and conditions on our services.
- 2) Support the creation of local Peoples' Assemblies, and build the Peoples' Assembly and its actions – similar to those which took place earlier in the year such as the Recall Conference on 15 March, the National Demonstration on 21 June, the Budget Day Demonstration on 19 March and the Women's Assembly on 22 February.
- 3) Support the call, raised again at the autumn 2013 TUC Congress, for continued discussion of a general strike and to back the call at the TUC for a national day of action against austerity, including co-ordinated strike action.

GMB@PCS BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. K. HENDRY (London): Congress, the heart of this motion is based on an understanding that in the absence of a Labour government committed to ending austerity, the only programme for defeating austerity is to support a national coordinated strike action. Congress, this message is increasingly popular

amongst trade unionists and working people. On 30th November 2011, 2.5 million public sector workers, 30 trade unions, GMB workers, took strike action. People in this room took strike action. It was the biggest strike action since the 1926 General Strike. Since last autumn fire fighters, teachers, university lecturers, Unison, Unite in Higher Education, probation workers, even police staff in London, have taken strike action and in some cases they have won concessions. We have seen prison officers take illegal strike action. We have seen criminal lawyers go on strike against the legal aid cuts, another aspect of austerity. We have even seen over 50% of police officers vote to win the legal right to take strike action. So, there is an increasing mood in this country amongst growing numbers of working people to defeat the austerity that we have all been talking about today, and yesterday, that is destroying the lives of our members, that is destroying our rights, and the institutions that we took years to build.

These recent strikes have been about individual unions. What we now have is another public sector strike on 10th July and around 1.5 million workers are going to be striking against the 1% pay cap. We have GMB members in schools and councils now being balloted and will hopefully be taking strike action on 10th July.

Congress, we need to support our sisters and brothers in the local councils and in the schools, we need to attend picket lines, we need to go on marches to support them. Their fight is our fight. They will also be striking alongside up to half a million teachers and civil servants. We know that the Government is scared. A week ago *The Independent* reported that ministers have been summoned to a crisis meeting to discuss how they are going to deal with this challenge. This is a challenge to the fundamental plank of their policy, austerity, not because we cannot afford a living wage, not because we cannot full employment, not because we cannot afford free healthcare at the point of delivery, or a progressive welfare system from cradle to grave, but because a right-wing government, and I think a couple of people made this point earlier, seized on the 2009 banking crisis to drive through a massive shift in wealth from poor to rich. It is a class war that we are facing by them on us and we need to fight it.

Congress, the Government has made over 35 U-turns since May 2010. It is increasingly vulnerable in the lead-up to the general election. It is possible to defeat austerity but only if we fight. We need to harness the huge anger that has been expressed in this room, yesterday and today, because it is not enough to be angry, we need to fight. A day may not be enough on 10th July but it will show these bullies that their time has come and it will put them on the run. If it is not enough, then this motion also supports the growing call for the TUC to implement the motion, overwhelmingly supported by the TUC members two years ago to look at how we call a general strike. I do not have time to anticipate the CEC arguments, I know, but the legalities and so forth are going to be difficult but they will be entirely possible to overcome. They will say the TUC is too slow but we pay the TUC wages so let's demand that they progress this motion.

I repeat what I said at the start, we cannot sit on our hands waiting for a Labour government to end austerity. If they win next year, Rachel Reeves confirmed that they will not overturn the 1% public sector pay cap, they will not renationalise the railways, and there is every chance they will be voting through more benefit caps. Please support a fightback against austerity. Please support the motion for coordinated strike action. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kim. Secunder.

BRO. S. FORREST (London) seconded Motion 101. I am going to take a slightly different tack on this. Under the austerity programme of this Tory-led Coalition workers across all sectors and in all sections of society have been attacked. This motion demands a fightback against austerity and the details of a programme for this fightback. In the London Region we are very proud that we have had a very recent

and inspiring struggle and victory against austerity that of the Medirest workers at Ealing Hospital. At Ealing Hospital catering and cleaning staff employed by Medirest were being paid at a lower rate than other employees at other hospitals and this is a direct result of the generalised austerity driven agenda from Downing Street. The GMB, under the leadership of branch delegate and reps, Dean Gilligan in the E10 Branch met with the members at Medirest to discuss these issues and when the management refused to meet for meaningful discussions, the members decided with the full support of the GMB, regionally and nationally, to mount a campaign against austerity for fair pay and better terms on holidays and sickness entitlement. The members took a day of action, marvellous spirit, inspirational mood of fightback and resistance. This did not budge the management so this great group of members decided to take in total 11 days of strike action and I believe that Paul Hayes' leadership of the London Region in this dispute by putting the full weight of the region behind deserves to be recognised at this Congress. *(Applause)*

On the strike days, activists came to support the Medirest workers and there was a constant stream of noisy chanting, accompanied by toots of buses and cars passing through the car park to make sure management knew that they were there on the picket line. Supporters who came by to visit included activists from other unions, such as the NUT, Unite, GMB, Unison, etc., etc. The workers forced the management to negotiate and table through their spirit of resistance and their spirit of unity, and they won, comrades. What did they win? They won a 16% pay increase immediately up to £7.31 an hour and within I think a year they will receive up to £9 and £9.30, respectively, the living wage, comrades. These comrades won the living wage of a 44% increase. The role and support of the GMB London Region, Paul Hayes, the local branch secretary, and all the reps putting the full support of the GMB behind these workers in dispute really shows very practically how we as the GMB can fight austerity. We should celebrate the victory of Medirest. That is the way forward. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come into the debate? No? You are good! Thank you. Can I ask Ann Leader of the CEC, on Motion 101, to come up, please?

SIS. A. LEADER (CEC, Manufacturing): President, Congress, the CEC is asking you to support Motion 101 with the following qualifications. GMB and the trades union Movement have continued to campaign and defend the rights of working people against employer and government attacks on their wages and conditions. You have seen clear evidence of our support on days of action and protest marches that have taken place nationally and regionally. However, our qualification covers the call for GMB to support the People's Assembly and coordinated strike action, and a general strike.

Firstly, on support for the People's Assembly many of the aims of the People's Assembly organisation are in line with our principles and campaigns. GMB and our members have been actively supporting and participating in regional and local anti-austerity marches and demonstrations much before the formation of the People's Assembly last June, and we will continue to do so in our own right. On coordinated action as a key campaigning union GMB are happy to support TUC coordinated campaigns and work with other unions to build opposition to the austerity cuts and take joint action where agreed. Indeed, GMB are currently working with the TUC to coordinate our presence on a national demonstration in support of Britain Needs a Pay Rise, which will be taking place in London on 18th October. However, the CEC would want to qualify the call for coordinated strike action or discussions on a general strike.

Whilst the Government's austerity measures have touched the whole of our membership, GMB notes the wide differences between TUC affiliates. GMB had this debate at TUC Congress and we took the position that strike action or a general strike would involve calling all unions in both private and public sectors to coordinate action and we note the real differences in opinions between numbers of unions on the legality of a general strike. It is clear no immunity on grounds of a trade dispute would apply. GMB

has many members who would be exempt from industrial action as they provide emergency cover or are in caring professions. Furthermore, GMB would not call our members to action without a democratic ballot. Therefore, the CEC is asking you to support this motion but with the qualifications I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ann. Does London Region accept the qualification? Yes? Thank you, Kim. Can I now put Composite 9 and 101 to the vote? All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Composite 9 was CARRIED.

Motion 101 was CARRIED.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: HOUSING

Introduction and Summary of Recommendations for an Incoming Labour Government

Background

The last few years have seen major problems for thousands of households on moderate or lower incomes in all forms of housing. In 2005 the GMB Congress adopted a Report – ‘*A Fair Deal on Housing – quality affordable housing for all*’ which identified fundamental problems in housing provision with home ownership increasingly out of reach, the stock of affordable social housing declining, and escalating costs of inadequate private rented accommodation. That document also pointed out the detrimental wider social and economic repercussions of housing market failures and went on to suggest solutions.

Since 2005 things have become significantly worse. We have had the economic crash and credit crunch, a continued failure by both Labour and Coalition Governments to ensure enough new housing is being built and the drastic cutback by the coalition government in 2010 in resources for social housing and for local government generally.

Like thousands of others, GMB members and their families have faced problems in all housing sectors and all parts of the country and GMB Congresses have continued to draw attention to the problem and the need for radical new policies. A significant number of Resolutions on housing have been submitted for Congress 2014.

In order to give context to the debate at the 2014 Congress the CEC has produced an analysis and Report proposing new strategic policies for the housing market as a whole. This Report attempts to analyse current and past trends in housing and make radical but realistic proposals for a comprehensive housing strategy for an incoming Labour government. It will be for Congress to consider each policy area and make a final determination on GMB policy on all aspects of housing.

That strategy should look something like what is set out in summary in the following pages with the details in the Report Sections 5 and 7 from page 30 onwards.

Summary Strategy for an Incoming Labour Government

The Problem

Household formation is occurring at twice the rate that new dwellings are coming available. This means housing costs are rising in all tenures and most parts of the country. This is causing severe problems of affordability. This can only be tackled by a long term strategy including the doubling of recent levels of new build.

An incoming Labour Government from 2015 will need to make affordable housing a central part of its economic and social strategy. Some of the strategic and institutional changes will take time to put into full effect but the intention needs to be clear from the start with an immediate emergency programme and legislative action from the first session of the new Parliament.

Target

A target for new build homes of 250,000 per year plus a minimum of 30,000 empty homes brought back into use;

At least 80,000 of the target need to be in the social housing sector. This cannot be done without a major programme of Council house building.

Strategic Delivery

- All Housing Policy and resources for England focussed in one Whitehall Department
- A long Term Plan to switch over 20 year Government support from Housing Benefit to New Build and improvement
- Establishment of City Region level Housing Delivery Bodies with equivalent bodies in Devolved Administrations and for Rural Housing

Immediate Moves

- Halt the integration of Housing Benefit into Universal Credit
- Integrate and Redirect Support Guarantee Schemes from Help to Buy to Help to Build
- Fundamental Review of Social Housing 'Affordable Rents' Policy
- Stalled Developments of over 6 months face sanctions or be transferred
- Local Authority borrowing powers for housing to be redefined and the cap removed
- Introduction of Housing Bonds for Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Developers of Affordable Homes
- Start a Financial Conduct Authority Review of the Mortgage Market to achieve greater stability and equity
- Start discussions with Pension Funds on commitments and regulation to direct capital into all forms of affordable housing
- Start discussions with construction industry on shortages of finance, land and skilled labour and how to overcome them.

First Term Legislative Programme

- Compulsory Acquisition of Empty Homes
- Regulation of Private Rented Sector
- Changes to Planning Laws on land designation, mixed communities and social housing
- Legislative Basis for Housing Commissions at City Region level

- Separation of Regulatory and Funding Roles of HCA and establishment of an Affordable Homes Commission
- Improved Building Regulation on Housing Design
- Legislative Basis for Rural Housing Commission

Possible Second Session Legislative Programme

- Affordable Homes Commission and Rental Market Regulator
- Housing Bank
- New Towns

Note: *There would also need to be parallel developments in the Devolved Administrations. Housing is, of course, a devolved matter. The position under the Devolved Administrations is included in some of the analysis and, to some extent, the policy proposals, but the Report is primarily addressed to housing policy in England.*

But can we afford it?

There will be those that say that as a nation we cannot afford the level of investment in housing this kind of target requires. But, in a more impoverished past we have found rather more resources for our housing needs as do other comparable nations today. Also, we have enough land for homes without concreting over the Green Belt or the countryside.

Of course we can afford it.

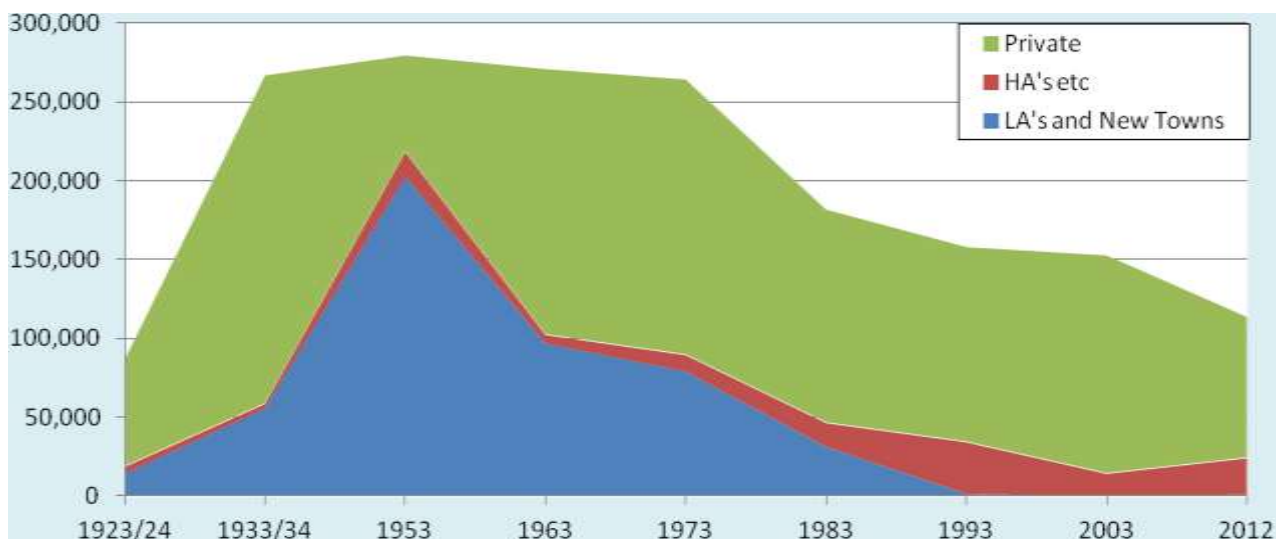
The real issue it is that we cannot afford not to.

Housing Report

1 Housing: The Central Issue

- 1.1 The central problem for housing in the UK is pretty straightforward. For the last three decades the number of new households requiring accommodation has been growing at nearly twice the rate of new dwellings becoming available. The latest estimates show the need for accommodation running at 260,000 extra households per annum against a completion rate for new build dwellings in 2013 of 110,000.
- 1.2 The rate of new household formation has increased gradually but steadily over recent decades; this reflects a number of factors – increased longevity, more single parent families and a greater propensity for families to split up through divorce and separation, as well as immigration and internal migration – that have all pushed the rate up. But those factors have been clear for some time and ought to have alerted policy makers to the need for a drastically increased supply of homes. Even allowing for some conversion and some re-utilisation of empty property this has meant that the rate of increase of housing supply needs to double, and without a drastic change in direction looks like continuing to do so. Instead, over the last three decades we have had a reducing total level of new build - through widely different political periods and dramatic changes in the balance of tenures – and in the last few years we have had a rate of house building lower than at any time – apart from the war years - since the 1920s.

Chart A: Total House Completions by Sector - 1923-2013



- 1.3 The drastic fall in house completions affected both private and social housing but private house building fell drastically in the recession but is now turning up again. It is the long run fall of new build in the social housing sector which is most dramatic. In recent years only a few hundred new council homes have been completed and only a few thousand new Housing Association properties. We need a step change in supply but in the last hundred years no previous step change in the level of new build and of new homes provided has ever been achievable without a major contribution from local authority housing.
- 1.4 The overall failure of supply in all sectors has inevitably led to massively higher house prices and unaffordable rents, increased overcrowding, increased instances of young people living with their aging parents until well into their thirties, huge and rising waiting lists for social housing - and ultimately increased homelessness and destitution.

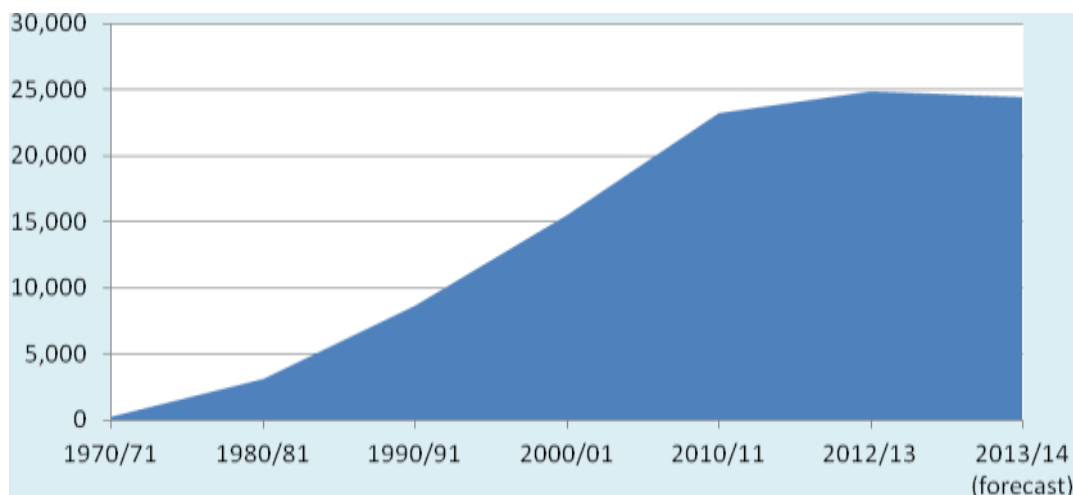
Table 1: Increase in Incomes, House Prices and Rents 1995-2013 (1990=100)

	1995	2014
Average Incomes	100	180
House Prices	100	259
Private rents	100	219
Social Rents	100	190
Ratio of House Prices to Average Incomes	3:1	7:1

These are aggregate figures. There are substantial differences between the nations and regions which this Report goes on to show.

- 1.5 There are also different effects and different policy implications for the three main sectors of housing – owner occupation, private rented sector and social housing – with the provision of social housing falling most rapidly in absolute terms and in relation to need – mostly as a direct result of the housing policies (or lack of them) of successive governments. It is important to recognise, however, that the three different sectors interact. High house prices, expensive mortgage repayments and unaffordable deposits push households into the private rented sector. High rents in the private rented sector lead to both pressure on social housing and to people taking on mortgages they cannot afford. Lack of social housing provision and rising social rents push families into the private rented sector. High prices and costs for first time buyers in the owner occupied sector push demand onto the private rented sector and hence higher rents there; the reduction of available social housing also pushes people onto the private rented sector; and Government imposed formulae cause social rents to reflect those in the private sector and hence costs rise there along with reduced availability.
- 1.6 These are all symptoms of one stark fact. We are not providing enough affordable housing for our people. And without drastic change of strategy we look set to continue to do so.
- 1.7 The effect of all this is partially obscured – and the impact on low income budgets partially cushioned - by the burgeoning expenditure on **Housing Benefit**.

Chart B: The Growth of Housing Benefit 1970-2013, Total Expenditure (£m)



Housing and Inequality

- 1.8 The net outcome of decades of failure of housing supply in all tenures to meet demand and of swings in government policy and funding is not only just that housing has become hugely expensive but also that housing availability, affordability and policy have become both cause and effect of the wider story of growing inequality – by income, by class, by geography and by tenure - that is so afflicting our society. If we could achieve a long term housing policy that addressed the supply and

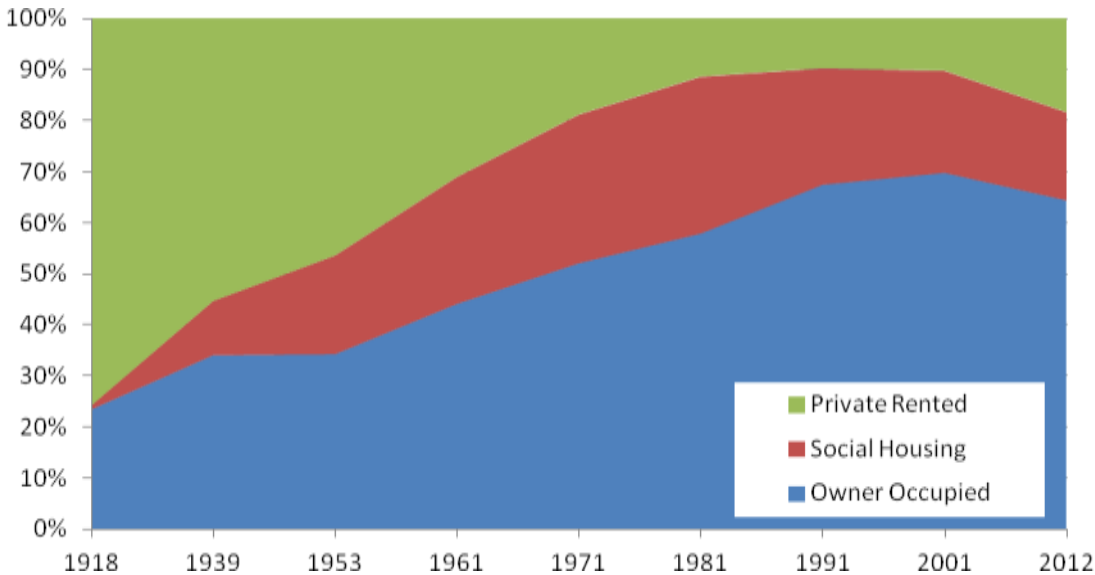
affordability issues we would also be making a contribution to reversing some of the other fundamental trends in inequality.

2 The History – the long view

This section looks at the long run changes in tenure and in house building to put the present predicament in context.

- 2.1 Over the past century there have been dramatic swings in the balance of tenure of housing in Britain. Before and after the First World War the vast majority of people – nearly 80% - lived in accommodation rented from private landlords. Whole streets of towns were given over to crowded working class private rented housing. In general only the Upper Middle classes and above – less than a quarter of the population - owned their own homes.
- 2.2 There was minimal provision of what is now called social housing and that mainly provided by the Victorian philanthropic trusts – Peabody, Carnegie, Cadogan, Sutton etc – without state support, though local councils were starting to build homes for rent after the legislation of 1907.

Chart C: A Century of Changing Patterns of Tenure, 1918-2012



- 2.3 The **interwar years** saw major increases in owner occupation with the development of the suburbs and the advent from the twenties of bank and building society mortgage availability to the middle classes and respectable working class families. The twenties also saw the beginning of significant council house building – first in Scotland and then - following the first Labour Government’s Housing Act on a national basis - of significant council house provision.

Table 2: Interwar Rates of Completion of Homes

	Total	Private	Social Housing
1920s	86,200	67,500	18,700
1930s	266,600	207,900	58,700

Even so, up to and through the Second World War and into the fifties the majority of households lived in private rented accommodation.

2.4 In the **Post-war period** from the 1945 Government onwards the Labour Government's strategy represented a new start. Nye Bevan was the Minister of Health and Housing. His vision was to end the segregation of housing by tenure and class. In his famous phrase (quoted in the 2005 GMB Congress document) he wanted to abolish the notion of 'working class housing' and turn streets into *'living tapestries where the doctor, the grocer and the butcher and the farm labourer' lived side by side*. Publicly provided housing for all social groups was part of that vision. There was substantial political backing through periods of both Labour and Conservative Governments for provision of quality Council Housing – built to Parker Morris standards and much superior to the majority of private rented – and indeed to some owner occupied housing. Social Housing – for the most part **Council housing** ie houses directly provided by the local authority continued to grow and to provide secure tenured accommodation for all income groups. Although the traditional Housing Associations and Trusts always played a part they were nowhere near as significant as Council housing in the provision of social housing.

Table 3: From the Fifties to the Seventies: Rate of Completions of New Dwellings per annum

	Total	Private	Social Housing
1940s	131,000	30,000	101,000
1950s	233,000	82,000	151,000
1960s	301,000	178,000	123,000
1970s	257,000	141,000	116,000

- 2.5 Through this period **owner occupation** was growing rapidly with increasing incomes and increasingly easy mortgages. New build and conversion for owner occupation soared and owner occupation had displaced private rented as the largest sector by the sixties and went to over 60% of all households by the eighties.
- 2.6 Meanwhile the **private rented sector** declined rapidly to become in most instances a short term option and a residual market. What had been the dominant form of tenure only forty years earlier had declined to only 9% of all households at the 1991 Census. It is now claimed that this was a result of landlords pulling out of the market due to rent controls but the main reason was the availability of mortgages and social housing lets for the kind of families that previously had only been able to rent from private landlords.
- 2.7 Throughout the post-war period up to the eighties there was more or less a consensus that permanent housing was mainly of two sorts – you either owned your own home (or more likely were paying off a mortgage) or you were a Council House tenant.
- 2.8 Owning your own home came to be seen as the 'norm' with the housing life cycle being seen as a 'housing ladder' a short period when single in private rented accommodation, followed by a 'first time buy' usually a small house or flat on marriage; and then a more expensive, larger house as the family grew. And the house provided an inheritance for your children.
- 2.9 Most people recognised that there was also a need for an alternative and an option – not necessarily confined to the low income groups – of providing secure social housing for families and pensioners. In both cases you had security of tenure – as long as you could afford the rent or mortgage payments. And in both cases you were supported by government policy and fiscal provision. Council rents were kept at broadly affordable levels – and well below private rents in most cases. And mortgage holders were prevented from overstretching themselves by building society and banking practice and Treasury rules restricting advances to about 2.25 of (joint) salary and by tax relief on mortgage interest.

- 2.10 This was certainly not ‘parity of esteem’ but it was a recognition that both forms of tenure were needed and were valid and both required security and government support. And there was a degree of political consensus to that effect.

3 The Politicisation of Housing

This Section looks at the ways in which the ideologies and policies of recent Governments have directly affected the housing market.

Thatcher: The Right to Buy and Deregulation

Table 4: The Thatcher Years: Deregulation and the Right to Buy

	1979	1997
Average House Prices	£20,000	£76,000
New Build UK (of which Social Housing) (000s)	252,000 (133,000)	191,000 (29,000)
Private Rents per week	£30	£62
Social Housing Rents per week	£7	£41
Owner Occupation	57%	69%
Social Housing	32%	19%
Private Rented	11%	10%

- 3.1 Previous Conservative governments – despite the frequent rhetoric of the Tory Right and their friends in the media - had largely maintained the post war consensus on housing. Indeed the highest levels of council house building were achieved under Conservative governments with Harold Macmillan as Housing Minister. The Thatcher Government with its central theme of a property owning democracy and a penchant for privatisation decisively broke with that consensus. In particular they targeted council housing. The resources for local authorities had been severely hit after the 1976 IMF crisis under the previous Labour Government but it was the Thatcher government that started to put the brake on hard on all local authority expenditure on council housing – new build and maintenance.
- 3.2 They then introduced a national **Right to Buy** for council tenants. It should be recalled that many local authorities – including prominent Labour controlled ones – had previously sold off some properties to sitting tenants but that had been a matter of local discretion and terms and the money was usually used for reinvestment in the rest of the council’s housing stock. The move to a national right to buy on terms determined centrally – with very large discounts - was a dramatic change. It was also hugely popular amongst council tenants and that in part helped sustain the Conservatives in office for 18 years. Over the first ten years in the UK as a whole over two million tenants acquired their own council flats and houses.

Table 5: From the Eighties to Now: Rate of Completions of New Dwellings per annum: GB

	Total	Private	Social Housing
1980s	180,317	131,249	44,068
1990s	150,419	124,704	25,716
2000s	146,947	127,704	18,999
2010s	133,000	107,000	16,000

- 3.3 Some analysts detect an underlying slowdown of the move to owner occupation by the late eighties but the figures were undoubtedly boosted upwards again by the Thatcher Government’s introduction of Right to Buy for Council flats and houses. Of the peak figure for owner occupation – 72% in 2006 – around 8% represented properties purchased under Right to Buy.

- 3.4 Right to Buy was always a deeply divisive political issue and marked the end of any de facto consensus on housing policy. It was undoubtedly a popular policy and gave thousands of council tenants – including many GMB members and other moderately paid trade unionists and their families - the only affordable opportunity they were ever going to see of getting on the housing ladder. This Report deals below with the current position on Right to Buy and what to do about it. But both then and now the crucial flaw in Right to Buy has been the deliberate decision not to use the receipts from Right to Buy sales to help invest one for one in new social housing to keep up the stock. A decision that was regrettably not significantly altered by the 1997 Labour Government.
- 3.5 Hence the reduction in social housing under Right to Buy had two effects : the size of the social housing sector reduced significantly; but new – mainly young - households who increasingly could not get onto the ‘housing ladder’ had no option but to move to the Private Rented Sector.
- 3.6 The key problem with Right to Buy was what happened to the money received. Not only were councils not required to use the receipts to improve or replenish their own housing stock – they were expressly forbidden to do so. Moreover access to borrowing by local authorities was constrained and the level of new build council housing fell drastically. Insofar as the Government still supported social housing it preferred to see it delivered by the Third Sector ie mainly Housing Associations (although it should be noted that this was not by any means the view of all Conservatives in local government).
- 3.7 The deregulation of private landlords and private rents – started under the Heath Government – was completed under Thatcher – but this did not bring a flood of new properties for rent – on the contrary as a proportion the private rented sector continued to shrink.
- 3.8 Meanwhile owner occupation was encouraged and the mortgage market boomed. Although mortgage tax relief started to be phased out under John Major towards the back end of this period, there was full regulatory and fiscal support for the extension of mortgages into new areas. Owner occupation grew from 57% to nearly 70% during the eighteen Thatcher/Major years.

New Labour: Decent Homes, Stock Transfers, Rent Restructuring and Credit Crunch

Table 6: The New Labour Record 1997-2010

	1997	2010
Average House Prices	£76,000	£251,000
New Build UK (<i>of which social housing</i>) (000s)	181,000 (25,000)	138,000 (29,000)
Private Rents per week	£72	£150
Social Housing Rents per week	£41	£67
Owner Occupation (%)	69	67
Social Housing (%)	19	17
Private Rented (%)	10	16

- 3.9 The new Labour Government from 1997 wanted to change direction but required resources to do so. In the 1999 Comprehensive Spending Review substantial resources - £4bn a year in 1999 prices - were made available for public sector housing from the Treasury. It was decided that the top priority was to improve the quality of existing council housing – particularly the large 1960s urban council estates which had suffered severe neglect and dilapidation during the Thatcher years with consequent problems for the quality of life in those areas. This became the Decent Homes programme and did significantly improve the quality of many thousands of council estates and properties, although some of the delivery was inept. This choice to go for improvement rather than new build was a completely understandable decision on priorities but in retrospect it was a mistake – it meant that resources available to local authorities from the centre for new build were seriously inadequate to deal with the growing needs gap.

- 3.10 Meanwhile tight Treasury control maintained restrictions on local authority borrowing by continuing to include local authority borrowing for creation of new (housing) assets as part of the public borrowing requirement – something that is not the case in other comparable economies (see below).
- 3.11 On Right to Buy the new government did not reverse the policy but did reduce the discount and hence the demand for RTB particularly in London and other areas of rising house prices. Most importantly however the rules restricting use of the revenues from Right to Buy to invest were only partially lifted and little of the money was recycled into new build.
- 3.12 Concerns about local authority finance and the state of some authorities Housing Revenue Accounts led to a focus on the level of rents paid by council tenants. This led to the Rent Restructuring requirements which consisted of a formula to take account of local income levels and the level of local private sector rents to - by stages - raise the level of rents required of council and housing association tenants.
- 3.13 Most dramatically the Labour Government encouraged and incentivised councils to further divest themselves of their housing stock. Most **stock transfers** were subject to votes by tenants. Some of the ‘Yes’ campaigns promised a lot more than was delivered by the new providers but it is also fair to say that there are many examples of an improvement in the experience of tenants after transfer. Many Housing Associations – partly through mergers – significantly increased their property portfolios in this period. Local Authority stock fell substantially. To date stock transfers have occurred with 1.2million formerly local authority buildings across Great Britain.
- 3.14 Councils also engaged in transfer of management but not of ownership to the newly invented concept of ALMOS – Arms Length Management Organisations who are mostly private companies. ALMOs have taken on significant numbers of former Council staff – in the higher echelons at enhanced salaries and in the lower echelons often on reduced conditions. The transfer of management to ALMOs in most cases did not require a ballot of tenants. There have been mixed results: some have improved tenant satisfaction but in other cases there have been problems and a significant number of authorities – Sheffield, Leeds, Ealing for example - have seen failures by ALMOs and taken back in house their housing responsibilities. Others are known to have considered doing so but the financial costs are a major disincentive. In some cases the move to an ALMO is clearly the first step to full privatisation.
- 3.15 This is a reflection in the bias in central government support between stock retaining and stock and management transferring authorities. Support was given to authorities engaged in stock transferring, to developments with a private finance element or to transfer of management to Arms Length Management Organisations – but not to Councils who wished to invest directly in social housing and manage their own housing stock.. Indeed the last major GMB Congress document on housing in 2005 was largely concerned with pressing for a ‘fourth option’ of direct investment by Council. Although gaining significant support in the Labour Movement the government did not countenance this ‘fourth option’.
- 3.16 When the economic crisis and credit crunch struck in 2007/8 there were multiple effects in the private sector: mortgage advances dried up, house prices fell in most parts of the country, many owner occupiers were into negative equity. Much of the blame for the crash was laid on banks and mortgage providers advancing too easily to the so called ‘sub prime’ market (ie lower income households) and hence requirements for deposits increased and closed the market to many. Total new build fell to its lowest level since the 1920s and new build for social housing fell to a trickle.
- 3.17 The fallback in the proportion of households in owner occupation – from 71% in 2005 to 63% in 2013 was unprecedented and largely unpredicted. It may be that we have reached saturation point in owner occupation – after all many high income continental European countries like Germany have much lower levels of home ownership and much higher levels of private and cooperatively rented accommodation. But given the profound attachment to ownership in this country it is more likely that

we will continue to see growing demand for home ownership return. Whether that demand can be met is another matter.

- 3.18 The fact is that owner occupation via mortgages remains overwhelmingly the dominant form of tenure – and the most socially desirable and hence the most politically sensitive. Moreover, the state of the mortgage market and of house prices determine largely what is happening in the other sectors. If access to first time mortgages is restricted or prices and deposits unaffordable then the pressures on the Private Rented sector and on the Social Sector grow. Rents in the Private Rented sector inevitably rise; and successive Governments have introduced formulae to ensure that social rents also rise to reflect the private sector.
- 3.19 In the last few years of the New Labour government Housing Ministers did recognise the central problem of shortage of supply relative to the rate of new household formation. Attempts were made by the Government to introduce new paradigms of house purchase eg from rent to mortgage, shared equity etc and to provide schemes for key workers in areas of high housing stress; these had very limited success and did not have a wide take up by either developers and builders or by potential householders themselves. Prospects for a programme of new build of carbon zero homes in the Eco Towns project also came to nothing.

The Coalition: Cuts, new schemes and the Bedroom Tax

Table 7: The Coalition’s Performance

	2010	2014 (est.)
Average House Prices	£251,000	£257,000
New Build (<i>of which Social Housing</i>)	138,000 (29,000)	131,000 (25,000)
Private Rents per week	£151	£160
Social Housing Rents per week	£67	£74
Owner Occupation	67%	64%
Social Housing	17%	16%
Private Rented	16%	20%

- 3.20 The Coalition have coupled their general pursuit of an austerity programme with disproportionate cuts falling on local authority budgets - and an antipathy to local authority housing. One of their first acts was to cut by sixty percent the subsidy for social housing that was provided in England via the Housing and Communities Agency. They also – as part of the dismantling of all English Regional structures - abolished regional targets for new and affordable housing which under Labour had been the most important planning lever for driving new build – albeit unsuccessfully in most regions. Instead the Coalition concentrated on reforming the planning procedures and legislated for what they saw as greater localism - in a self contradictory way, on the one hand loosening the planning laws and introducing a presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’ in the New National Planning Framework, and on the other hand giving local communities a veto. The presumption for development raised the ire of countryside and environmental groups; the local referendum veto gave extra leverage to nimbyism.
- 3.21 Reform of the **Housing Revenue Account** started under the Labour Government has been completed under the coalition. It purports to give greater autonomy to Councils - and does to some degree - but they are hobbled by the final Treasury imposed settlement whereby Councils in England were landed with over £34bn of historic debt which limits their ability to raise money for new build.
- 3.22 The Coalition have seriously undermined planning authorities insistence on having an ‘affordable housing’ element as a percentage of all large developments under **Section 106 Agreements** and

equivalents – which has often been the only way any social housing or affordable housing for any form of tenure got built.

- 3.23 They have also have attempted to breathe new life into the **Right to Buy** market with increased levels of discount: they claimed that the receipts from RTB would be ploughed back into new social housing – originally claiming this would be on a ‘one for one’ basis. In practice the outcome has been over 20,000 Right to Buy sales under this government with only 2,000 new homes built from receipts - a ratio of ten out : one in.
- 3.24 Post recession mortgage advances have been sticky and the net result was further falls in overall housing starts and a further growth – encouraged by further fiscal measures – in the Buy to Let market. In November 2011 the Coalition produced the nearest thing they had to a housing strategy – in the White Paper *Laying the Foundations – a Housing Strategy for England*. That document recognised the seriousness of the problem and set out a number of new interventions but it was rapidly overtaken by events. By 2012 house prices began to revive particularly in London and the Government began to react to the growing political and public concern at the lack of housing supply. They introduced a remarkably complex series of schemes to try to revive the market culminating in the Help to Buy scheme guaranteeing mortgage payments.
- 3.25 The full range of these new schemes both before and since the White Paper is shown in the Table below. There is some overlap between these programmes.

Table 8: Support for Housing Schemes, Full list of Schemes introduced by the present Coalition Government

New Homes Bonus	Private Rented Sector Guarantee Scheme
Affordable Homes Programme	Get Britain Building
Affordable Rent to Buy	Going Place Fund
Affordable Housing Guarantee Scheme	Local Grants Fund (Housing Infrastructure)
Help to Buy Equity Loan	Builders Finance Fund (Small Sites)
Urban Development Corporation (Ebbsfleet New Town)	Estate Regeneration Fund (Barking)
Help to Buy: New Buy	First Buy
Help to Buy : Mortgage Guarantee	Custom Build Homes (Self build)
Build to Rent	Empty Homes Initiative
Source: Reply to Written Question May 2014	

- 3.26 So one can hardly complain that the Coalition have been inactive on housing. The trouble is that many of this range of initiatives have either been ineffective - or counterproductive in that they now threatened a new Housing Bubble. And the rest have not adequately delivered.
- 3.27 On the ‘Affordable Homes Programme’ there is Government expenditure funnelled mainly to Housing Associations in England via the GLA in London and the HCA elsewhere in England. After cutting the social housing part of the budget by over 60% the Coalition have, for this Spending Round (2011/15), set a target of 80,000 new homes and are on course to exceed that at about 88,000 over the five years, which is of course less than 18,000 per annum . It is also within this at the end of 2012/13 about 69,000 of approvals had been for ‘Affordable Rent’ and the other 19,000 for ‘Affordable Home ownership’.

Table 9: The Affordable Housing Strategy for England, 2011/2015

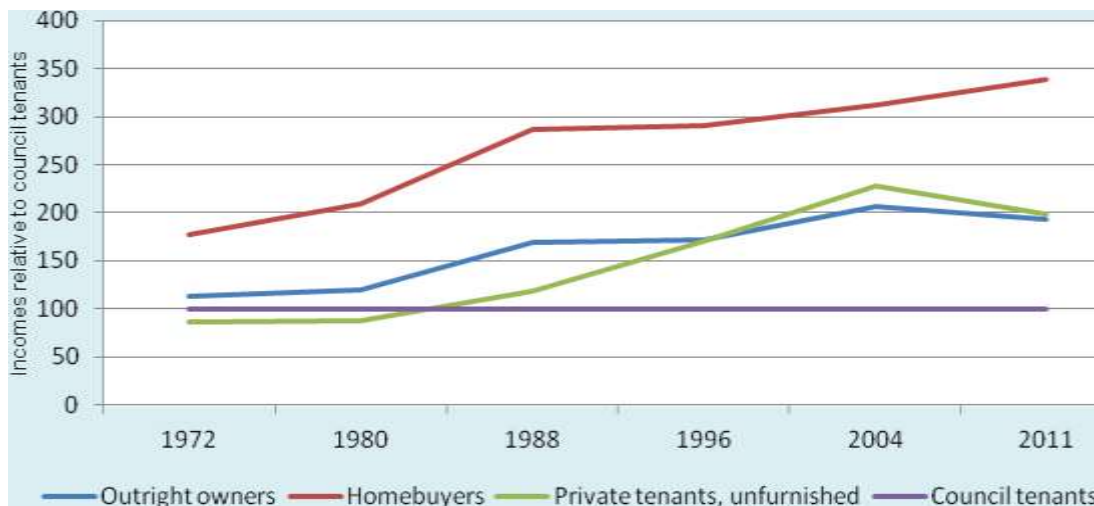
Social Rent	Nil
Affordable Rent	69,694
Intermediate Rent	Nil

Affordable Home Ownership	18,853
Total	88,000

- 3.28 It is also important to note that this is not traditional council housing. Virtually none of it goes into local authority new build and within the social sector the intention is to move from housing for 'social rent' to 'affordable rent'. Up to the end of 2012/13 the majority were on 'social rent' but in future the bulk of housing via Housing Associations will be at 'Affordable Rent' and for most Regions that level is already approaching 80% of market rent although it is still 69% in London.
- 3.29 On the private sector side - home ownership and Buy to Rent - most of these schemes are on the demand side. The only significant statement of intent on the supply side has been the now reiterated commitment to build **Ebbsfleet** as a New Town with 15,000 dwellings.
- 3.30 The **Private Rented sector's** long decline into residuality had started to reverse during New Labour's period in office and by the time of the 2011 Census private renting households had proportionately doubled to 20% and the sector was again larger than the social rented sector. For thousands of individuals and families in their twenties and thirties it really is '**Generation Rent**'
- 3.31 The recent Report by the Public Accounts Committee (*29th Report of session 2013-14: HC114*) suggests strongly that the first of these schemes – the **New Homes Bonus** cannot be shown to have worked and the Government at the last count were still evaluating it. For some of the other schemes where the Government has indicated their estimated number of new homes that will be brought onto the market as a result of these schemes; but there is some overlap and the basis of these figures is not entirely consistent. Because Help to Buy and other schemes focussed on the demand side and not on supply economists are predicting a dangerous housing bubble. This has certainly occurred in central London aggravated by an influx of overseas money buying up central London property. Recent Bank of England warnings and the Financial Conduct Authority's new regulation on mortgage advances may slow down demand and hence the price escalation.
- 3.32 The Coalition criticise the level of **social housing** they inherited but have done little for new supply on the social housing side. Their constraints on local authority spending and the indirect effects of welfare reform on the finances and credit worthiness of Housing Associations have prevented any revival in new build except in very limited areas, and have encouraged Housing Associations to sell off prime property on the open market.
- 3.33 There has been an attempt to reallocate space within social housing and to query the traditional security of tenure. Ostensibly because of the general shortage of social housing and the need to ensure people are housed in appropriately sized flats and houses, the Coalition have introduced the '**Bedroom Tax**' to try to prise out 'under occupiers' in the social housing sector who receive housing benefit – although the sanction does not apply to pensioners, the group most likely to be 'under occupying' a property. Perhaps pensioners votes even in social housing are too important. The impact of the Bedroom Tax on lots of families – not least those with disabled members – has been widely documented elsewhere. In practice the policy is unlikely to release much property that will be appropriate for families – largely because there is in most areas little provision of smaller single bedroom premises supposedly more appropriate to the 'under occupiers'. In practice they will either pay the extra, go into arrears or sublet – but rarely release their homes. Apart from the unfairness the policy will just not work.
- 3.34
- 3.35 On **social rents** the Coalition have taken rent restructuring several stages further under the somewhat Orwellian title of '**Affordable Rents**' and introduced a target affordable rent of 80% of the private sector market rent. We therefore have parallel systems of 'social rents' and 'affordable rents' with new tenants on the higher rent. Affordable Rents are already virtually at 80% for new lettings outside London. In London given the sky high private rent the 'affordable' level is only at 69% of private rents.

- 3.36 With private rents having risen and still rising in areas of high housing stress this linkage formula is also now making social housing unaffordable in London and many cities and to push more low income households out of central areas unable to afford either private or social rents. Whilst at the same time the Government are trying to reduce levels of Housing Benefit.
- 3.37 In the seventies the average income of Council tenants was more or less on a par with that of private tenants and older owner occupiers who owned outright. Council Tenants are now much more clearly the lowest income families.

Chart D: Income of Council Tenants Compared to other Tenures: 1970s to present



- 3.38 The net result will be further housing segregation between rich and poor and between different forms of tenure: the opposite of what is needed for community cohesion.

*Meanwhile the **Labour Party** in Opposition have begun to rethink their whole approach to housing. Amongst other things they have already announced a target of 200,000 new homes pa by 2020; they have committed to a system of regulation for private sector landlords; they have called for a fairer housing and land market and greater cooperation between local authorities on planning and housing needs; and they have engaged Sir Michael Lyons to look at how ambitious levels of new build can best be achieved – to be published by the Summer. A fuller policy statement is in the process of being pulled together for Party Conference and for the General Election campaign.*

The Devolved Administrations: Differing Perspectives

- 3.39 Housing is now a devolved matter in all three devolved administrations. In Northern Ireland housing has been a devolved issue through all the stages of Stormont and Direct Rule and has developed its own features in particular the role of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Until devolution England and Wales were under the same regime and in Scotland there was a degree of administrative devolution before full political devolution. Since 2000 full devolution in Scotland and Wales have seen some differences from the role of the Westminster government in England. Of course the all important financial side with its effects on the mortgage market is a UK Government responsibility. The net result has been that most of the history of the changes in tenure and provision have not been that different in all three countries but there now are some significant policy changes emerging.

Scotland

- 3.40 The change in tenure over forty years has been dramatic. In the seventies over half of Scottish homes were in local authority housing; that is now only 13% with another 11% in Housing Associations. The rate of take up of Right To Buy in Scotland was proportionately higher than almost anywhere else in the UK with nearly half a million homes going from local authority to private housing.

Table 10: Changing Tenure in Scotland (%)

	1971	2011
Council Housing	52	13
Housing Association	1	11
Private Rented	16	12
Owner Occupied	31	64

- 3.41 In general there is less housing stress and less pressure on house prices in Scotland, although there are exceptions like Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Even so house prices in Scotland have on average recovered pre 2007 levels whereas they have not done so in the Northern Regions of England. The rate of new build is still very low though recovering a little. Waiting lists are over 400,000 and the lack of social housing has seen a revival of the private rented sector. Rents in Scottish social housing have been kept relatively low; that has been seen in recent studies (eg. *University of Glasgow and Joseph Rowntree*) as a significant contribution to reducing poverty in Scotland – but the switch to private rented with higher rents as a setback.
- 3.42 The Scottish Government have been more supportive of social housing than Westminster despite similar Treasury constraints. The immediate cut by the Coalition to affordable housing in England was 64%; in Scotland it was ‘only’ 34%.
- 3.43 The most dramatic difference between Scotland and England on housing policy has been on the post devolution attitude to **Right to Buy**. The RTB was restricted to existing tenants in 2002 and discounts and eligibility reduced in 2011. In 2013 it was announced that RTB would cease entirely by 2017.
- 3.44 The Scottish government has issued a long term housing strategy to 2035 which covers all tenures. That envisages a need for new housing over the whole of that period running at 5,000 new homes per year. That looks to be below the level demographic studies would suggest but is well above what is being achieved at the moment.

Wales

- 3.45 The Welsh housing market has had the highest level of home ownership in the UK but the housing market differs significantly in different parts of Wales. The most recent Welsh Government policy statement (*Homes for Wales 2012*) takes a strategic view to 2036 and is based on a high projected growth in housing need in the Cardiff area (+59%) and the Swansea area(+22%) with most of the rest of the country being below 10%. Those projections give an annual rate of household growth at 8,000 per year – over twice the current rate of new build.
- 3.46 The decline in the proportion of households in social housing has fallen from 29% in the seventies to 16% now – broadly in line with that in England with Housing Associations now accounting for two thirds of the social housing stock. The Welsh Government wish to see significant new investment in social housing as well as tackling the very high level of empty homes in Wales, which also has a high level of second homes.

3.47 The level of new affordable homes in the strategy is:

Table 11: Wales Affordable Homes Strategy

<p>7,500 of which 500 will Cooperative Housing 5,000 Empty Properties brought back into use.</p>

This ambition is however twice the level of recent years new build or new availability.

Northern Ireland

3.48 During the boom years Northern Ireland house prices rose faster than most of England – then fell further post 2007 and have yet to recover.

3.49 The individual local authorities do not hold housing stock in Northern Ireland – partly a reflection of the fraught politics of the province. The local authority role is exerted only really via the Housing Council which acts in an advisory role to both NIHE and the Government Department (DSD). Since 1971 almost the sole provider of social housing was the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which also played the central role in overall housing policy in the province – providing funding, setting standards, delivering the decent homes standard, and advising government. In recent years however there has been a major shift in provision to housing associations. There has also been the Northern Ireland version of RTB – the Home Sales Scheme. The NIHE remains the funding channel for most social housing and at the moment is still a major landlord – but the decision has been taken in principle that NIHE will cease to be a provider and manager of housing stock and remaining stock will be transferred to housing associations (and possibly in the longer term to the new local authorities). This will change the landscape of Northern Ireland’s housing policy significantly as NIHE has been the key driver hitherto.

3.50 The Northern Ireland Government Strategy (*Facing the Future 2012*) envisages a build of social and affordable housing at the rate of 2,000 pa. However the allocation for net capital investment in housing has been falling:

Table 12: Net Housing Investment Funding in Northern Ireland, 2011/15

2011/12	£130m
2012/13	£89m
2013/14	£74m
2014/15	£90m

Again the level of build needed is above the level of new build currently being financed or achieved.

The three devolved administration have therefore all drawn up both five year and long term housing strategies with a major emphasis on social/affordable housing. Current outturns on new build for either the private or the social housing sectors however do yet matchup to the annual new build implied by the strategies.

4 Where we are now: Dysfunction in all Housing Markets

This Section looks at each of the current position on affordability of housing and the prospects in each of the main housing forms of housing tenure – and then looks specifically at the position in rural areas and in London.

Housing Costs and Affordability

- 4.1 In all parts of the housing market – owner occupation, private rented and social housing there is a huge problem of affordability and availability. Each of these sectors is dysfunctional; and the dysfunction in each affects the others.

‘Affordability’ does not have a clear definition. And the term ‘affordable has been used by the present Government in a kind of ‘newspeak’ for the marketisation of social rents to a level which is clearly not affordable to low income families – certainly without Housing Benefit. Academics have sometimes defined affordable as something along the lines of ‘housing costs of no more than a third of household income after tax and before benefits’. In those terms a significant proportion of the population – first time buyers without a deposit from the ‘Bank of Mum and Dad’; those attempting a move to a larger house or a more expensive area; leaseholders faced with escalating service charges, higher rents for private tenants, and social housing tenants - all face increasingly unaffordable housing costs.

Over the past twenty years the proportion of our household incomes directed to housing expenditure has increased almost across the board but particularly for families, for lower income groups and for and younger households.

Owner Occupiers: The Delusion of ever Higher House Prices

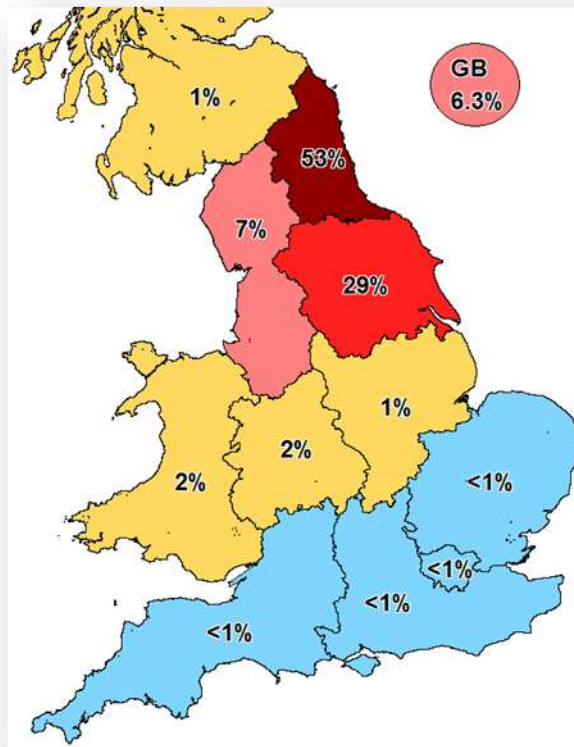
- 4.2 The politics of housing need to take into account the fact that this crisis of housing costs is actually not a problem for all of the population – indeed it probably affects considerably less than fifty percent of all households. And it is this other half who are most likely to vote and for whom an increase in house prices appears to be actually good news....
- 4.3 The two thirds of households classified as owner occupiers are by no means a homogenous group. Of the 14.3m owner occupiers in England in 2013 just under half had fully paid off their mortgages: they are almost completely immune from the escalating costs and recent turmoil in the housing market.

Table 13: Breakdown of Owner Occupation in Great Britain, 2013

Owned Outright	7,152,000
Paying Mortgage	7,184,700

- 4.4 Of the other 7 million about another 3 million bought prior to the mid nineties and are near the end of their mortgage repayments: they will have seen a substantial rise in the value of their properties and although they will have worried about the loss of value following 2007 they will still have substantial gains since buying. It is those who bought at the peak of the market – with high interest, high deposit requirements and high prices - between 2000 and 2007 who will have suffered significant stress with millions in negative equity for the duration of the recession. Even so for most of the country the period of negative equity has past – though it is still significant in the Northern English Regions for those who bought in 2007.

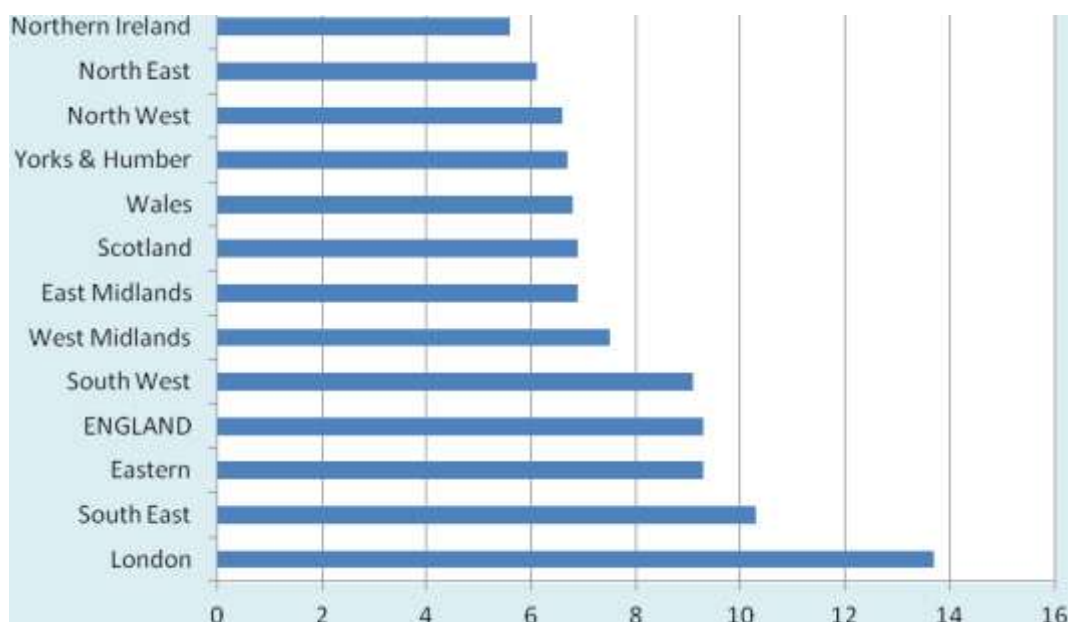
Chart E: Map on Negative Equity



- 4.5 Those who were able to buy during the six years of recession benefitted from both lower house prices (outside London) and low interest rates and are now benefitting from the recovery. At least half of those paying off mortgages therefore do not feel seriously affected by the housing crisis.
- 4.6 That does not mean that such fortunate owner occupiers are immune or unaware of the housing crisis. It is often their sons and daughters and grandchildren who are the would be First Time Buyers facing high prices, high repayments and high deposit demands who have the most acute difficulties in getting onto the housing ladder. For many the alternative is to stay in the parental home or join Generation Rent.
- 4.7 The private house market is a peculiar market relative to almost any other: It is over 90% a second hand market with the used price normally being higher than the new price; and it is almost the only market where consumer confidence and media assessment regard rising prices as positive. It is of course in housing terms an illusion that rising valuations of your home make you better off; if you wished to move in the same area there is no advantage. But house values in our society represent not simply a home but also social status, and are often a substitute or enhancement for a pension or savings, and also provide the prospect of an inheritance to the children. Hence a period of rising prices contributes significantly if irrationally to a 'feelgood factor' for those in houses whose values have markedly appreciated. That is why a house price bubble is no bad thing politically for governments in an election year....
- 4.8 The other three million or so mortgage payers are suffering – those who bought before the credit crunch in the years running up to 2007 and have at least 15 years to pay off. For them some things may indeed get worse - interest rates and hence repayments are bound to rise some time soon.

- 4.9 Difficulties are also faced of course by those who want to move to larger houses because of growing families or move to more housing stressed and more pricey areas for employment reasons.
- 4.10 Leaseholders too - who are classified as owner occupiers ie those usually in flats on a long lease to private freeholders (including many of those who bought under the Right to Buy and are leaseholders mainly of local authorities) may also be suffering because of increasing service charges and decreasing services.
- 4.11 However those most adversely affected by the dysfunction in the owner occupier sector of housing market remain those seeking to buy for the first time. The impact is different from Region to Region but the situation for those on median incomes and below is desperate in all regions. Whereas thirty years ago house prices were broadly three times annual wages or salaries they are now even in the least stressed Regions over six times average incomes. In low income Regions like the South West it is nine times. And in London at thirteen times it is literally impossible without savings or parental capital to raise the deposit, let alone repay the mortgage.

Chart F: House Prices to Median Incomes ratio by Region 2013



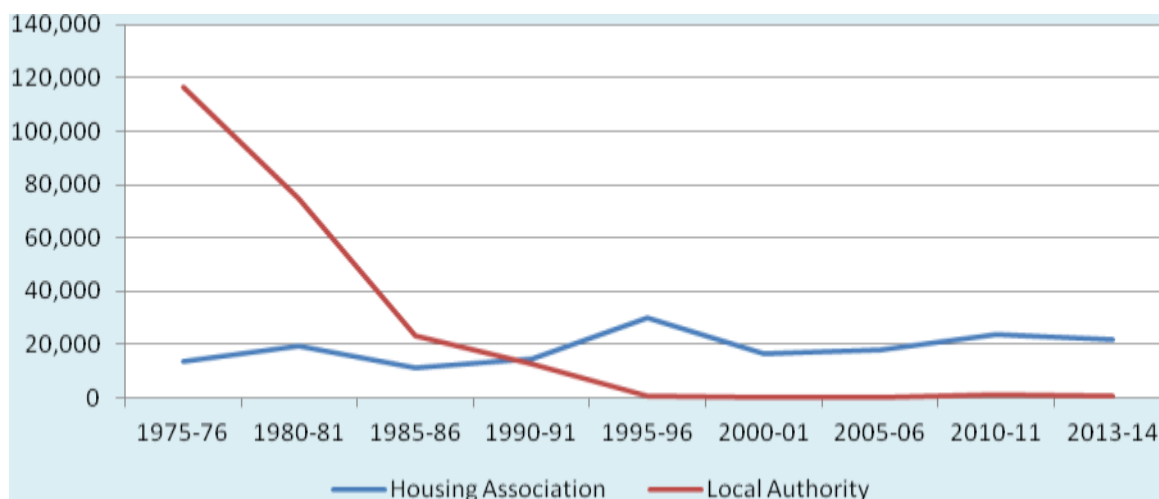
Just as in the affordable and social sectors the long term switch of Government support from house building support to housing benefit has stunted provision, so interventions like Right to Buy and its predecessors although they have helped families onto the housing ladder have led to inflated prices but not encouraged supply. In all Regions First Time buyers see average house prices well beyond their reach. It remains to be seen whether this increased availability of credit will develop into an unsustainable nationwide housing bubble – as it already appears to be London.

Social Housing: The end of Council Housing

4.12 Social Housing falls broadly into the Local Authority and Housing Association categories of provision, although there are also other charities and institutions on a small scale.

- Since the eighties there has been a drastic fall in new build by Local Authorities
- The Housing Association sector increased in size and in new build in this same period

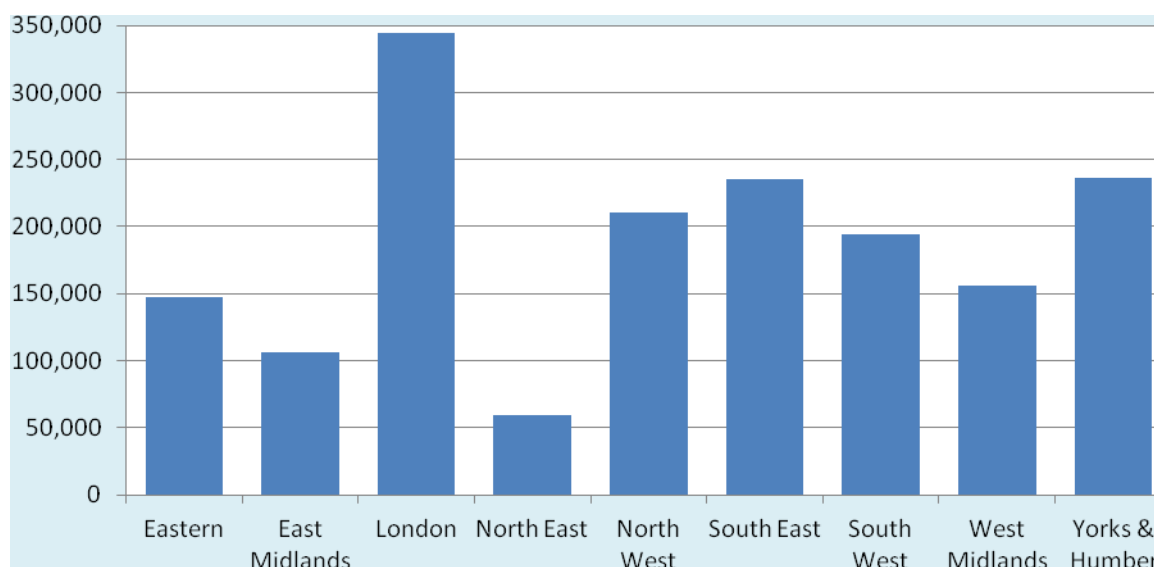
Chart G: Local Authority and Housing Association Dwellings Completed, England, 1975-2014



- 4.13 Combined with effects of the Right to Buy and in some areas programmes of demolition of some of the housing stock the total amount of Council Housing would in any case have seriously diminished. But from the Thatcher government and through the period of New Labour Government there was also substantial pressure on local authorities to transfer management and ownership of their stock to Housing Associations, charities and in some cases private companies. Many local authorities stopped holding any housing stock at all.
- 4.14 This growth of the Housing Association sector was mainly because of stock transfer but also because of a substantial increase in their own commitment to building new social housing. The last Labour Government's Policy was explicitly to rely almost exclusively on the Housing Association sector to build new social housing. This new build has included a significant and welcome amount of innovative housing – including relatively small provision of cooperative housing, housing for older persons and the disabled as well as traditional social housing provision for families and pensioners. And also some build of stock for 'rent to mortgage' transition.
- 4.15 The degree to which Housing Associations have been able to engage in new build has been impressive but has gone nowhere near making up what used to be carried out by local authorities. Capital available to Housing Associations has been restricted by the terms on which they can raise finance. Generally speaking it has been difficult for Housing Associations to raise money on the markets and – apart from help immediately on stock transfer only very limited help from Government. Housing Association collateral for raising loans is almost exclusively the value of existing assets plus estimation of future rental income. Uncertainty about both affects the ability to borrow. It has also meant that many Housing Associations have taken decisions to sell off some of their prime stock - initially to their own tenants but also on the open market; and in many new build there is a proportion sold for owner occupation or private rent – indeed that is often a requirement of the HCA ie the central government grant.
- 4.16 There have also been significant mergers within the Housing Association sector. This has helpfully improved professionalism but it has also tended to create larger less locally focussed organisations. This feeds a widespread impression that some of the larger Housing Associations are becoming less in line with their founding social objectives and acting more like purely commercial developers and landlords.
- 4.17 The decline of available social housing – most dramatically in the council housing sector – is emphatically not a reflection of a lack of need. The waiting lists of Councils up and down the land show there are huge numbers of families eligible for social housing who cannot get a flat or house in

their area - or anywhere else. Many of these families have been on the waiting list for years. Total numbers have risen by two thirds since 1997.

Chart H: Waiting Lists for Social Housing by Region, 2013



Attempts by Councils to manage down the lists – by devices such as so called ‘choice based letting’ has in most cases tended to aggravate the situation.

- 4.18 This position is further complicated by the change in rules whereby the first responsibility of councils has been redefined to requiring priority to be given to house those most in need. This means homeless and destitute families and successful asylum seekers take priority for emergency housing. Although that housing is short term rather than permanent tenure – emergency provision is usually up to 18 months and usually in private rented accommodation including B&Bs – but there are also a significant number of cases where council and housing association property is used for such provision rather than to house permanently those who may have been on the waiting list some time or have a connection with the area and would otherwise be at the top of the list.
- 4.19 This can raise a wider issue of concern for social cohesion. It is not surprising that for those who have been on the waiting list for a number of years should feel they should have priority and that this can lead to anger, resentment, social tensions and in some instances racial tensions.
- 4.20 Whilst local councils retain the responsibility for identifying and responding to housing need they are decreasingly the providers of accommodation. Some councils in England and Scotland no longer have any housing stock of their own. Successive governments have deliberately encouraged councils to divest themselves of existing stock and have indirectly prevented them from replenishing their stock. Housing Associations – Registered Social Landlords or now Private Registered Providers - are therefore now the major providers of social housing in most of England.
- 4.21 Meanwhile successive Governments have moved to ensure that rents paid by those in social housing not only meet the costs of councils, Housing Associations and other providers of social housing but also get closer to the level of housing costs in the private sector.
- 4.22 This in part reflects the general portrayal of social housing as ‘**subsidised housing**’. In reality social housing is rarely ‘subsidised’ in the normal sense of the word ie that the state (or other consumers) make a contribution to reduce the price/rent for a particular group. In reality over the history of council housing – and Housing Association housing – whilst there has been an initial capital outlay by the

provider and taxpayer, tenants pay rent over a period of years that – barring chronic uncollected arrears (which does happen) - both gives a return on that capital expenditure and covers the costs of maintenance and administration. Indeed the rules for the Housing Revenue Account require that council housing is in that sense self financing. That was to be sure not always the case – and some councils up to the seventies did set uneconomically low rents for council tenants but since the eighties that would not be allowable. Hence over time there is no long term cash transfer from the rest of the population to social tenants. Council rents and HA rents are of course considerably lower than in the private rented sector. Only in that sense is the concept of subsidy valid – that the Council or Registered Social Landlord could get a higher rent for equivalent property in the wider (private) rental market – but it is not a subsidy in the normal sense of the word. However there is of course a huge taxpayer subsidy to both private and social tenants through Housing Benefit.

- 4.23 Ostensibly because some councils were inadequately managing their properties and their Housing Revenue Account operations the Labour Government decided that Council Rents needed to be closer to market rent and other local economic measures. They introduced the **Rent Restructuring** strategy so that over time council rents and HA rents would reflect a formula based on a basket of local economic data – private rents, local wage rates and inflation – and over time move to a target rent at a higher level relative to market rents in their area. This Rent Restructuring has now been taken significantly further by the present Coalition Government’s Orwellian concept of ‘**Affordable Rent**’ with the target at 80% of private sector rents in the area and in the interim a three tier terminology for social rents – ‘social’, ‘affordable’ and ‘intermediate’ - the arithmetic division being overlapping and unclear in different statements and different local authorities..

The net result is that in the social housing sector there is chronic undersupply coupled with actual of imminent rent rises in a confusing set of rent readjusting regimes.

The Private Rented Sector: The New Landlords

- 4.24 The gradual revival of the private rented sector from the nineties was largely ignored by commentators until after the credit crunch when the sons and daughters of the middle classes began finding serious problem in getting onto the housing ladder in swathes of the country and the media invented the concept of ‘Generation Rent’. The nature of the availability of private rented accommodation and the terms and rent at which it is offered varies considerably even within individual cities. And the quality of accommodation is equally variable. In some towns there is a substantial area of student accommodation, often poor quality let on very short term leases or leased to the college authorities who then sublet. In another part of town there will be crowded multiple occupied dwelling with both single and family tenants on six months to three year leases – though sometimes longer. At the top end there maybe quite high quality long lease properties let to better off professionals and young families who until ten years ago would be onto their first mortgage. And at the bottom end we have instances of sheds, outhouses and garages being - mostly illegally - let out.
- 4.25 In almost all categories and all areas south of the Trent – rural as well as urban – there is a shortage of rental accommodation. Even for those seeking minimal accommodation Shelter found demand for single room accommodation in London had grown over five years by 20% but supply had grown only by 2%. Inevitably we therefore see rising private rents.
- 4.26 The most notable structural feature of this revival has been that most of it involves single-property landlords – some living in the property themselves some miles away or even abroad. Nearly four fifths of all private landlords (78%) rent out a single property – although obviously those properties may be let out in several flats. This **Buy to Let** growth reflects the understandable perception - with occupational pensions disappearing and the stock market unpredictable - that investment in property is the best and most reliable form of saving. It has also been encouraged by successive governments fiscal policy but particularly now by the Coalition’s schemes for Buy to Let and Build to let.

4.27 The role of largescale property companies is significant but – unlike in those countries in northern Europe where there has historically been a much higher level of private renting and lower levels of home ownership – such companies do not dominate the market or set the prevailing contractual conditions. In parts of Europe and North America there is a much bigger presence in the housing market of property companies, insurance based corporations and indeed mutuals and cooperatives.

All of this private rented sector market is largely unregulated as regards level of rents and length of tenure. Some councils are in the process of introducing landlord registration. The Labour Party have indicated they favour some regulation of rent rises – but that has led to a negative reaction by landlords and in the media. With economic revival and the threat of regulation it remains to be seen whether the rush to buy to let will subside but it shows no sign of doing so yet.

The Legacy of Right to Buy

4.28 The introduction of Right to Buy for Council tenants allowed thousands of families to get into home ownership who would never otherwise have been able to access a mortgage because their incomes were too low or they were too old. In that sense it has been a bit of a leveller and has certainly been and still is politically popular. It was not of course an abstract right; it has always been accompanied by very generous discounts on the value of the council property. After initial opposition the Labour Party supported it in principal although the level of discount was reduced in the early years of the New Labour Government.

4.29 The effect of Right to Buy on communities has varied. In sometimes places it has been beneficial. The absolute segregation of housing areas by tenure was never desirable. On some large estates or areas of what was concentrated 'mono-tenure' social housing, RTB led to the development of significant owner occupied tenure which has undoubtedly boosted the quality of life in some areas.

4.30 Unfortunately in others areas the delayed effect has been markedly less beneficial. As the original Right to Buy purchasers have died or sold and moved on, or their children have inherited, the onetime council properties have often been sublet by the new owners at substantially higher rents. And also often sublet privately and at higher rents with short leases – or often illegally with no lease – to those who previously would have been in social housing – or indeed rented back to Housing Associations or the Council who have to meet the higher rent and then let out the property to those on the housing list or in housing emergency. This can push the estates back towards ghettoisation having destroyed the original more stable community. And the process is a bizarrely expensive cost to the public finances – in terms of both Housing Revenue Account and Housing Benefit. What had been Council estates therefore suffer some of the downside of the bottom end of the private rented sector.

4.31 The Coalitions 'reinvigoration' of the Right to Buy in England has not led to a huge surge in applications – about 16,000 since the announcement. Meanwhile in Scotland, where the discounts and eligibility had already been curtailed it has been announced that RTB will end completely from 2017.

Reopening the basic argument on Right to Buy in England is probably counterproductive. But the terms on which it is offered need to be challenged.

It is the failure from the start to replace the social housing stock sold off under Right to Buy that is the key issue. Secure housing for low income households has been dramatically reduced at a time when societal inequality has increased. Any future Right to Buy policy has to be strictly balanced with new build equivalents.

The Particular Problem of London

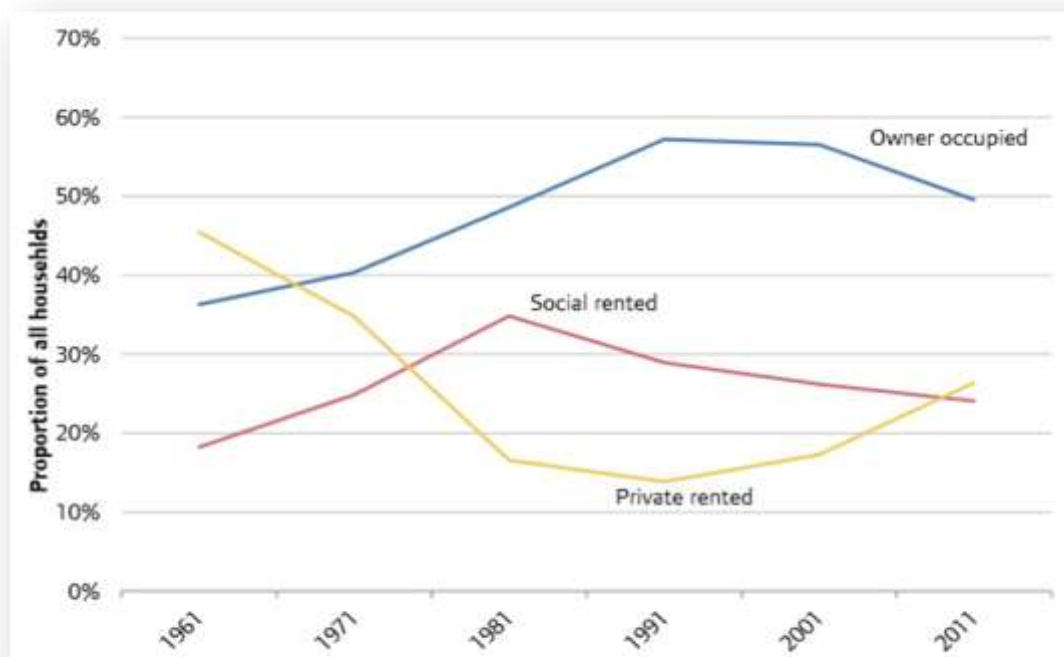
4.32 The housing situation in London is the extreme example of the pressures on housing costs which is affecting the rest of the country and it is the London housing market is the driver of those pressures and costs causing a ripple effect on the rest of the south east and beyond . It does however also have its own characteristics. These include :

- a rapidly growing population;
- a phenomenally high price on land including the many brownfield sites in London which should be available for housing;
- the massive overseas investment from oligarchs, corporates and the world's rich into central London into property that is seen as safe and hugely profitable investment rather than for housing;
- relatively high levels of private rented sector with escalating rental pressures;
- the inheritance of historically high levels of social housing in areas of high property prices;
- the two tier level of political and planning responsibility for housing in Greater London with both the boroughs and the Mayor.

4.33 In the last year house prices in London have risen 17% whereas the rise has been 5% on average in the rest of the country; London house prices now exceed the pre-crisis level by 25% but in all of the other Regions of England (except the South East) and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland prices have not regained pre crisis level or have only just about done so. Just recently both the Governor of the Bank of England and the country's largest mortgage giver have sounded alarm bells about a London house price bubble; Lloyds have now restricted London mortgage advances to four times salary – but of course that hardly touches the top end of the market which is skewed by those who have no need of mortgages but still drags the rest of the market with it.

4.34 London private rents are also rising rapidly in recent years. The supply of social housing has been hit by sell offs and demolition with until recently almost nil replacement by London Boroughs of their stocks and some of the Housing Association new build replacement being at market or near market rents rather than social rents. Several London Borough now intend to engage in new build but are constrained both by borrowing limits and by lack of available (or more accurately affordable) land.

Chart I: London's Changing Tenure, 1961-2011



- 4.35 When established the Mayor and the GLA had no responsibility for housing except very high developments; since 2008 the Mayor has had some strategic responsibilities and is drawing up a London Housing Strategy (latest version 'Homes for London : the London Housing strategy Draft for the London Assembly April 2014). That Strategy has the 'long term aim' of producing 420,000 new homes in London over the next ten years: of which 17,000 pa would be 'affordable' in various tenures and 5,000 for market rent. This is higher than any level achieved in London since the war. The draft strategy has ambitious and controversial proposals for new financial settlement for London Boroughs, land release, flexible tenancies and means testing of rents in the social housing sector, quality standards for private rental and proposals for London Housing Bank, Housing Zones and Garden suburbs outside the GLA area.
- 4.36 Irrespective of the merits of individual proposals the Mayor's Strategy does begin to show what an effective strategic approach could bring. Unfortunately the new build figure of 42,000 per year it is also twice rate of the last ten years and twice the rate of developments currently in the pipeline. It is not yet clear how that will be resourced in terms of finance or land. But at least it is a strategy.
- 4.37 Meanwhile in Central London the historic coexistence between high value owner occupied property and substantial social housing is under pressure. The combination of the legacy of RTB, welfare reform caps and the high level of private rented accommodation is pushing low and medium income families out of central London and the more affluent suburbs.

In the short term the key issue will be whether another London house bubble will emerge. That is partly a question for the Bank of England and the individual mortgage providers but whether they succeed will have direct effects on the ability of the strategy to be delivered. London specific regulatory powers intervention on limits, interest rates and availability of finance for London will need to be available – otherwise there is no chance of achieving the targets in the strategy.

In the longer term the unique GLA structure could provide for a much more interventionist approach by the Mayor and London Boroughs than the present strategy implies. London has a

huge housing problem and its effects are felt throughout the economy. It needs a radical new approach that goes beyond what the Mayor is so far providing.

Rural Housing

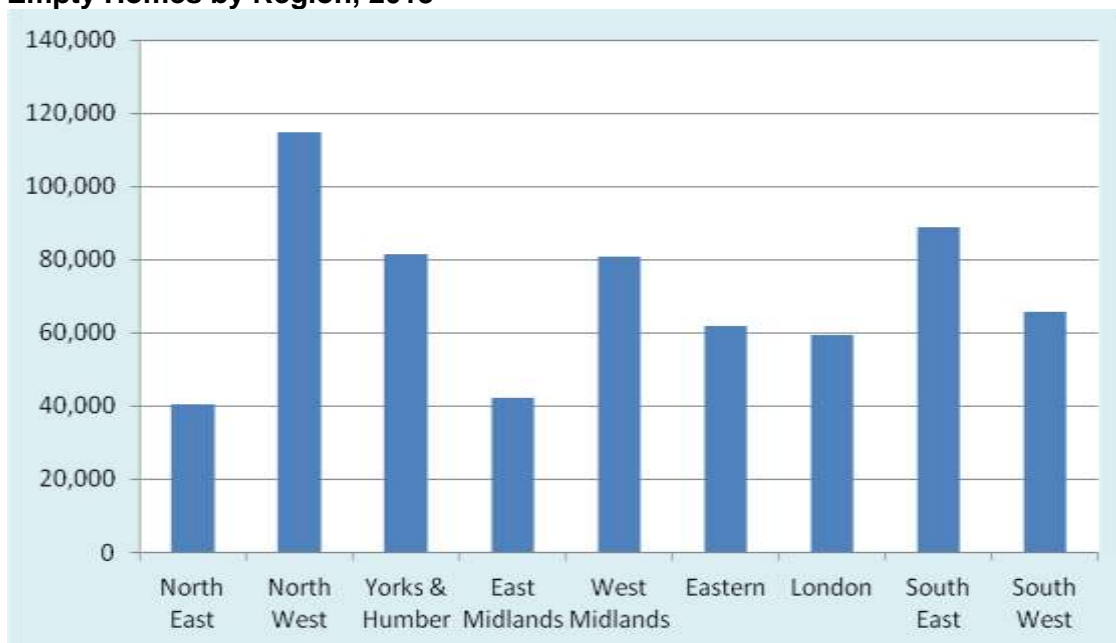
- 4.38 Much of the discussion of house prices and of lack of social housing is in terms of conurbations and urban areas. Yet some of the worst incidents of shortages and unaffordability face rural communities. This is no longer only a problem in the commuter villages around London and Birmingham. Market towns and villages throughout Great Britain face acute shortage of housing – particularly for the younger generation. This reflects a combination of planning restrictions and nimbyism, plus the influx of retirees and second homes, escalating house prices as well as the basic lack of social housing - with the previous (often very attractive) rural social housing having been almost entirely sold off . In many rural areas the ratio of house prices to average income is of the same order as central London. And almost any application for new build of anything approaching affordable housing is inundated with objections.
- 4.39 As a result there is often no chance of a young family being able to obtain or afford a house in the village or small town where they were brought up; if they work there they have to travel in from the nearest larger town. Villages and small towns become the preserve of the old and of weekenders.

The Labour Government commissioned a major study of rural housing but its conclusions were never acted on. Any comprehensive housing strategy has to have a rural dimension and solutions will often be different from those in urban areas.

Empty Homes, Second Homes and Holiday Cottages and conversions

- 4.40 Some contend that massive new build programmes are unnecessary to solve the housing crisis because there are so many empty homes. It is true that there are over 660,000 empty homes in England and Wales alone.

Chart J: Empty Homes by Region, 2013



- 4.41 However only 270,000 of these empty homes have been empty for more than six months. And the majority of those empty homes are not in the areas of greatest housing stress. Some of them regrettably - mainly in northern cities - are homes left void for housing schemes that never materialised and are intended to be demolished. There is also the opposite phenomenon of high end properties mainly in central London bought largely by overseas buyers and speculators for investment and often kept empty for long periods.
- 4.42 It is important those empty homes that have been left that way for more than six months are considered for bringing back into occupation. The Coalition have allocated £160m to do just that – although that will only re-mobilise about 11,000 homes. With more resources much more could be done. One way of raising money for that would be to penalise owners of empty homes. Ludicrously until recently local authorities levied only half rate of Council Tax on such homes – and also on some second homes – on the grounds that the owners were not using local facilities. It would be more appropriate that that the owners of homes left empty for more than six months continuous should pay a penal rate of at least double the appropriate Council Tax.
- 4.43 The total number of second homes is difficult to ascertain and there is a problem of definition but the official estimate is 1.2m in England and Wales. If they are left permanently unused for six months then they should also be treated like empty homes and charged double Council Tax. The majority of second homes however are used intermittently and are not easily made available for permanent housing.
- 4.44 There are parts of the country – Cornwall being the most extreme example – where second homes that are used rarely and holiday cottages that are let out only in the summer holiday exceed the very substantial housing waiting lists. Statistically, housing problems in Cornwall – one of our poorest counties – would be resolved if Councils and social landlords could use these houses for affordable social housing. But of course that would require confiscatory powers and could only be justified for those properties that are left empty for a full year – in which case they count as empty and would be subject to the same confiscatory powers.
- 4.45 Another possible source of new housing which is not really new build is the **conversion of office blocks** and other commercial premises where the company and the employment have disappeared. This is done to a limited extent and empty offices have been turned into commercial lets or leasehold property but the numbers are small. Again where a housing need is identified local councils could have confiscatory powers to take over empty premises and convert them for affordable housing. However confiscation is always fraught and subject to legal challenge and therefore to cost and delay.

Taking empty homes in its widest sense together with conversions and using much stronger confiscatory or compulsory purchase powers in areas of severe housing need could mobilise a few tens of thousands of homes; but refurbishment would be expensive and not enough to make a transforming impression on the total numbers needed. Nevertheless perhaps 30,000 – 50,000 in the early years would significantly reduce the numbers of new builds needed - but not dramatically change the big picture.

Housing Benefit – whose benefit?

- 4.46 With the cost of all forms of housing escalating way beyond any increase in incomes even before the 2007 economic crisis the welfare system has frequently taken the strain. Housing costs are taken into account in most means tested benefits and Housing Benefit is paid now to the majority of households in social and nearly half of households in private rented accommodation. The total cost of Housing Benefit is now **£24bn per year**. At this level housing benefit understandably is very much in the sights of a cost cutting Treasury. It is also a favourite source of stories for the right wing media to ridicule and undermine the whole form of the Welfare State.

- 4.47 Of course Housing Benefit was not a feature of the original Beveridge concept of the Welfare State; it was assumed that housing needs would be met by social housing. Housing Grants from both local authorities and social security developed at a fairly low level from the fifties and were replaced by Housing Benefits from the early seventies. It is the only part of the social security system that depends on the housing market in the area you live rather than primarily on personal or household income and circumstances.
- 4.48 Since the seventies payment of Housing Benefit has increased tenfold in real terms. However the numbers on housing benefit have not grown so dramatically : in other words it is the cost per recipient in both social and private rented accommodation that have risen so dramatically – not the number on benefit. And that reflects rising housing costs generally.

Table 12: Change in numbers on Housing Benefit and Total Costs 2002-2013

Housing Benefit Caseload	+17%
Housing Benefit Total Costs	+71%

- 4.49 This escalation of expenditure creates serious strains on the overall Welfare Budget in a period of constraints on public finances. In a fraught area of political and media debate Housing Benefit is also the most vulnerable of all welfare payments to attack and ridicule because payments reflect both the expensiveness of the property in which they are housed it is easy to find stories that can be represented as family fecklessness and/or local authority extravagance thus adding to public hostility to those on benefit. However it is instructive to see who are the recipients of Housing Benefit. Whilst the majority are in social housing an increasing proportion are now in private rented accommodation with higher rents and therefore higher benefit payments – an average of £107pw in private rented property compared to £77pw in the social sector.
- 4.50 More dramatically – and completely contrary to media myths – whereas in earlier decades the majority of HB recipients were pensioners or unemployed, more recently the biggest increase in receipt of housing benefit have been amongst those households in work which has more than doubled in the last ten years.
- 4.51 The Coalition have made incorporation of Housing Benefit into the proposed ‘simplification’ of the social security system into the Universal Credit payment – with plans to start from 2016. Integration of Housing Benefit – to be the Housing Element of Universal Credit in a wholly different system of income support is reportedly proving difficult within DWP – along with other elements of computerising the new Universal Credit system.
- 4.52 Meanwhile, the Coalition have made major attempts to cut the cost of Housing Benefit. Firstly they have put a cap on total benefit levels per household at £ 500 per week .or about £26,000 pa. This limit may sound extremely reasonable but the main impact of this will be on payment of Housing Benefit to families put into private rented flats and houses in areas of high housing stress and high housing costs – particularly and mainly in London. This cap is already leading to private landlords refusing to take benefit dependent potential tenants and is driving families outside of London. And as already referred to above the Coalition have imposed the ‘Bedroom Tax’ to limit the payment of benefit to those deemed to be ‘under-occupying’ social housing.
- 4.53 But the ultimate beneficiaries of the escalation of housing benefit payments are not the claimants who are castigated in the right wing media – but the ultimate recipients of the money. It would be wrong to deny that there are instances of scams and fraud but the real scandal of Housing Benefit is not the amount paid to families housed in expensive central London accommodation but the amount of this benefit money that ends up going to private landlords in all parts of the country– many of them multiple landlords; many providing less than satisfactory property for families to rent. Taxpayers money pays the rent to private landlords of 1.65m tenants in the private rented sector – 40% of all

private tenants and higher proportions in the Northern English Regions and Wales. Some of these properties were originally Right to Buy. And of course a large proportion of social housing families are tenants of private Trusts constituted as Registered Social Landlord – or Private Registered Providers as is now the favoured term.

- 4.54 A few months ago the GMB carried out a wide survey of the amount of housing benefit money that goes to private landlords and Private Registered Providers. That survey – based mainly on information from local authorities – showed how both small and large private landlords hugely benefit from this escalating cost but rarely are blamed for it by politicians or media.
- 4.55 The GMB research¹ found that it is very difficult to obtain full information on who specifically ultimately gets the money. Housing benefit is paid to landlords in two different ways – either – in the majority of cases - by the benefit cheques going to the tenant and the tenant then paying the landlord, or by direct payment of the benefit to the landlord: it is only the money that goes direct to the landlord that can be clearly identified in terms of the final recipient.
- 4.56 The survey was addressed to all housing authorities in England, Scotland and Wales who were asked to identify in each case the top twenty recipients of direct Housing Benefit payments in their areas. Even then details on the majority of private landlords are usually deemed not disclosable under Freedom of Information because they are single property businesses and receipts of public money are regarded as subject to privacy under Data Protection. That is being challenged with the Information Commissioner but for the moment is the stance taken by most councils and the names of those sole traders who appeared in the top twenty recipients were redacted; total redacted information ie where we have no idea how who is receiving it amounted to £138m pa.
- 4.57 What is disclosable however is payment direct to landlords with multiple properties. The GMB research set out a list of private individuals, companies and trusts which could be identified and featured in those returns. Several are registered offshore companies. Many are substantial titled landed families. Many are extremely wealthy individuals. This is not the kind of list which most politicians and media convey when they talk about housing benefit as part of a dependency culture.

This is a scandal - but the key strategic point here is that if only part of the money paid out by the state in housing benefit - a large proportion of which ends up in the accounts of private landlords and private trusts rather than the pockets of the poor – were devoted instead to building and improving affordable housing we would not have a housing crisis at all.....

The key fact in terms of government intervention in housing over the past half century has been that Government support up until the seventies had predominantly support to the Supply Side – via subsidies for building social housing – mainly council housing – has switched dramatically to support on the Demand Side ie mainly via Housing Benefit. A recent IPPR Report (*Together at Home 2012*) calculated that that the public expenditure balance had completely reversed – from being 85% on the supply side to the current position where it is over 90% on the demand side ie Housing Benefit.

¹ www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/landlords-hit-housing-benefit-jackpot

Key Factors for Change

This section itemises many of the areas of policy and provision which affect the ability of future governments to help deliver to meet current and future housing need; and draws conclusions for action.

The Mortgage Market

- 4.58 The wide swings in the levels of mortgage advances over the past decade and the terms on which mortgages are awarded creates an instability in the owner occupied market, particularly for first time buyers, which has knock on effects on the rest of housing provision. The pre 2007 credit boom with loans at above 100% of house value pushed prices up unsustainably; the credit crunch then saw severe cut backs in advances and unaffordable deposit requirements and some negative equity. Prices have now partly 'recovered' in most of the South of England, though not elsewhere and the numbers of mortgage advances are at a relatively low level and banks are likely to continue to be more cautious. The Help to Buy scheme whilst helping some buyers now threatens a housing bubble. What is needed is a more stable long term market.

The Financial Conduct Authority needs to carry out an urgent assessment of the mortgage market including Buy to Let with a view to developing a regulatory framework which provides a long term stable regime rather than boom and bust.

Public Finances

- 4.59 The Coalition Government is planning further and deeper cuts in public expenditure beyond 2014/15 and the Labour Opposition has indicated that it too would have to cut public expenditure. But resolution of the long term housing crisis is not possible without some significant public investment in housing of all kinds. A partial contribution would be to lift the historic debt burden on Councils, and allow the issue of Local Authority Housing Bonds.

An incoming Government's Comprehensive Spending Review must find immediate additional capital resources to deploy on housing. This will require some central government spending but also scrapping unnecessary limits on the ability of local authorities to borrow for housing investment.

New Sources of Finance

- 4.60 Given that it is clear that there will continue to be constraints on public funding for housing investment it is important that private sources of funding come forward for developments in all forms of housing. At present the capital markets and the financial institutions are not keen to invest in housing property and construction developers claim they therefore need at least a 7% return per year to finance their capital borrowings. That of itself means priority is being given to developments at the 'high end' of the market. This reflects an irrational attitude in City and financial circles since housing property is safe and steady and long term and should therefore attract many investors. Even in the world of pension funds – who by definition should be steady long term investors -there is little appetite for housing investment amongst either Trustees – some of whom may be GMB nominees or advisers to funds. Amongst Local Authority Pension Funds the Greater Manchester Funds have taken some initiatives to provide for affordable housing but the initiative has not been so far followed elsewhere. The current Chancellor himself has tried to corale and cajole large private pension funds into investing in infrastructure including large scale housing but little has so far come of that.

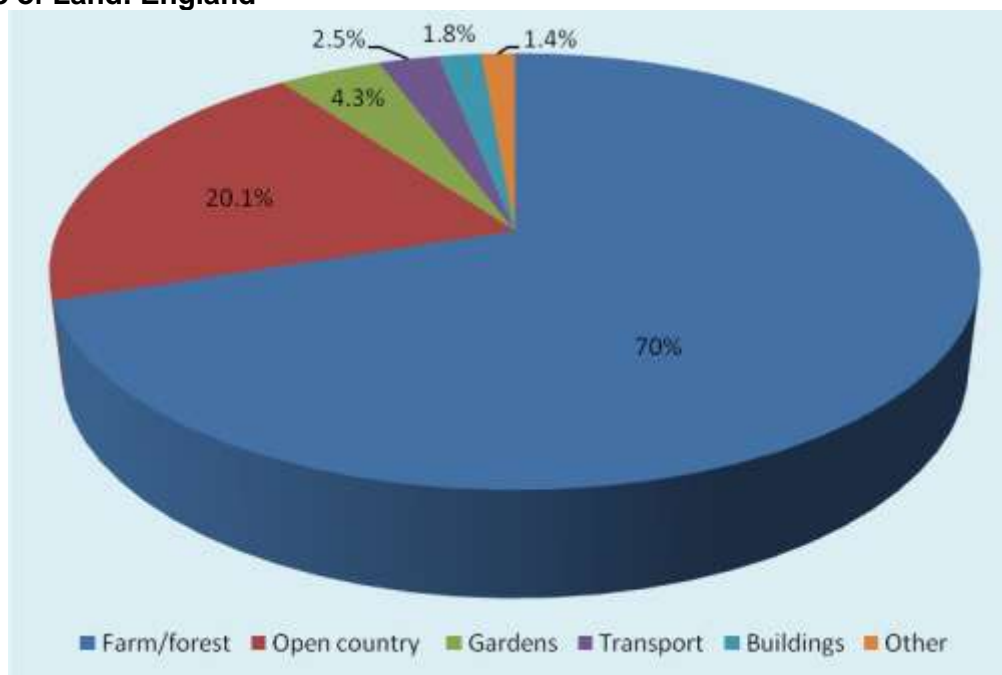
New financial instruments are needed and require Government initiatives and some government carrots and sticks. We should at least pursue : steps to incentivise public sector pension funds to invest a minimum proportion of their funds in affordable housing; earmarking an element of

any future Quantitative Easing to be for banks to buy Housing Bonds issued by local government, housing associations and private developers to invest in major new housing projects; and switching some of the government guarantee under Help to Buy to underwrite housing development.

Planning and Land

4.61 From the developers and construction industry as well as from elements in government the main excuses for not building more houses are usually concerned with the cost and availability of land and the alleged rigidity of the planning process. At one level there should be no problem about availability of land. Despite fears of an overcrowded country in England less than 2% of land is covered by buildings and about 11% could be termed ‘developed’– less in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Chart K: Use of Land: England



4.62 There are plenty of brownfield sites and plenty of low grade agricultural land without environmental restrictions that could be used without concreting over the countryside. But of course the cost of land is different. The premium on land with planning permission and agricultural rated land is huge. That is why despite there being adequate land available developers are putting on pressures to build on the – hitherto much cheaper – rural land and pressure to lift restriction on building on the Green Belt land. That pressure should be resisted but the presumption for sustainable development should be maintained as far as housing is concerned. And the Labour Government’s requirement to give priority to brownfield sites should be unequivocally reinstated

4.63 Availability of land is vital. However we also have to remember that all large and medium housebuilders hold substantial landbanks and that there are also significant numbers of stalled housing schemes – for up to 400,000 houses on one estimate – that are in the pipeline and already have planning permission but have stalled and should be accelerated. The Labour Party has already committed to sanctions to bring forward those schemes.

4.64 There should also be strong resistance to the pressure to water down existing commitment or abandon the use of **Section 106** deals to require with planning permission a minimum proportion of social housing or affordable housing. Flexible approaches and partnerships – including more directional use of the Community Infrastructure Levy - can be worked out but the objective of

delivering more social and affordable housing from every significant housing planning permission must be maintained.

- 4.65 There is also much pressure in development industry circles about release of **public land** – particularly local authority land. Unused or underused public land should indeed be considered for release by local and central government for housing purposes and its release speeded up - but it should not be 'given away' as a bribe to developers. Release of public land should normally either be subject to reversion after say 25 years or else should be the local authority's contribution towards partnership schemes with developers or Housing Associations against which the local authority gets a long term return from future revenue flows and enhancement of value.

The presumption for sustainable development for housing should be maintained but planning priority for new schemes should be on brownfield sites and marginal agricultural land. Release of Public Land can play a part but should not be given away. Green Belt land should only be used for building if it is replaced by an equivalent increase in Green Belt land elsewhere

Stalled schemes should be started or sanctioned. Section 106 arrangements should not be watered down and indeed should be used more aggressively.

There should be a national (English) figure for the normal minimum proportion of social housing and affordable housing in all significant housing schemes.

- 4.66 Commitment to building whole **New Towns** also may need to feature but given the planning complexity and the infrastructure costs they are probably for a second phase of an overall Housing Strategy.

The Role of Local Authorities

- 4.67 Despite political parties professing belief in localism, Local Authorities ought to be in prime position to assess housing needs in their area and take steps via direct intervention and the planning process to ensure those needs are met. In practice Councils have very few clear powers, responsibilities or resources to act strategically. This is even more important now the regional tiers and regional targets have been abolished.

It is important that local authorities in England are given explicit power and responsibility for assessing housing needs and ensuring they are met.

- 4.68 On local authority finances Housing Revenue Account reform was started by Labour and continued by the Coalition to give local government more self sufficiency in housing finance. But centrally determined targets on rent levels and draconian limits on borrowing in practice restrict what they can do. The UK is alone amongst EU countries and the IMF and OECD in including local authority and public corporation investment in housing and infrastructure against public sector net debt. This means there is a limit on Council borrowing for housing investment. It is true the Coalition recently increased that limit but only marginally.

The Treasury need to move to the internationally accepted definition of public sector net debt and consequently remove the cap on local authority borrowing as far as housing is concerned.

- 4.69 The additional capital resource could be spent in different ways – on councils own stock or in partnership with the private sector and housing associations in creating mixed tenure developments. However there is a problem: most local authorities no longer have the capacity and expertise they once had in their Housing Departments, Architects Departments and Direct Labour Organisations to plan, build and manage significant new housing. A recent Smith Institute report (*Does Council Housing have a future? Nov 2013*) consulted those English local authorities who still hold and manage direct housing stock of their own. Councillors in these authorities mostly expressed a

keenness to engage in building of council homes but their ambitions were constrained by capacity and finance –on average they were thinking of 1,000 new properties over 10 years - far below what would be required to meet a challenge of 80,000 new social dwellings per year. Moreover it is also the case that local authority areas are often too small and planning for housing needs and delivering those developments needs to be on a wider cross boundary basis. The ‘duty to cooperate’ in the recent Localism Bill is too weak to facilitate this.

A very substantial strategy for council house building needs to be put in place urgently. However there are problems of capacity in local authorities as well as issues of land and finance availability. The next government will need to establish broader based delivery bodies for strategic housing – probably on a City Region basis.

Regulation of Private Landlords

4.70 The rapid expansion of the private rented sector reflects the inadequate supply of social housing and affordable owner occupied property. But there is also a significant role for the sector. The sector has always been dominated by small landlords but recent tax advantages and schemes to encourage ‘Buy to Let’ projects have fuelled an influx of new smallscale landlords. These so called ‘amateur’ landlords have variable experience and their properties are of variable quality. Many are reasonable landlords but too many have little regard for the rights or quality of life of their tenants. There are issues of length of tenure – six months is very common, and issues of exorbitant rents, arbitrary evictions and rent rises, and unreasonable retention of deposits. There are also instances of inadequate, poor quality property, unsafe, unhygienic, damp, draughty and energy inefficient premises being let to vulnerable and desperate tenants. At the extreme end there are cases of letting out garden sheds and outhouses. There are also issues of exorbitant charges by **letting agencies** on both landlord and tenant. And there are serious issues regarding safety – particularly of electric and gas appliances and provision of alarms. Yet this is an almost entirely unregulated sector. Local Authorities have a discretionary power to require registration of private landlords but only a few do so. There is a lack of intelligent debate about the sector: landlord organisations reject almost all calls for regulation and Labour Opposition calls for limited forms of rent regulation -protection against arbitrary rent rises - have been denounced by government Ministers as ‘Venezuelan (or alternatively Vietnamese) socialism’.

Local Authorities need to be required to set up systems of regulation of private landlords and as a condition of registration require minimum standards for length of tenure, terms of contract, safety, condition and energy efficiency of rented accommodation. Probably to include at least reserve powers to intervene to impose fair rent levels.

The Future of Social Housing

4.71 Much of government policy - under both parties – and of media comment has been to aim to phase out key aspects of social housing provision. There has been a clear move away from direct Council provision and reliance mainly on the RSL sector. There have also been moves to marketise rent to private sector levels, to end security of tenure bringing in short lease periods instead; and moves to end security of tenure and to means test incomes for rent fixing purpose. It is important to reassert that councils as well as Housing Associations will have a key role in increasing and improving social housing; that councils and registered social landlords should set rents according to local circumstances not according to private sector levels of Whitehall imposed formulae; and that although there may be some flexibility on tenure and on rent levels for future tenants that again would be a matter for each local authority or Housing Association.

In setting a target for overall new build Government should also set a proportion for social housing to come from both local authorities and Housing Associations. The aim should not be

the creation of segregated housing or mono tenure estates but as a part of planned mixed tenure communities.

The Right to Buy in the future

- 4.72 As noted, Right to Buy has had both positive and negative effects: it has provided opportunities for individual households but overall it has diminished affordable housing provision for the community. The Right to Buy is being phased out in Scotland but the reality is that both politically and legally it is difficult to abolish Right to Buy - at least for existing tenants. But every RTB sale should be replaced and the terms on which it is offered and the degree and pace of any new RTB sales ought to be decided in the light of local needs and at local level.

Any house of flat sold under RTB in the future should be replaced one for one and like for like. The qualifying time for a tenant to be eligible should normally be no less than ten years. The level of discount offered on future sales should be determined at local level and should take account of the level of housing need in the area. Where the property is a flat the local authority freeholder should have discretion to determine that the flat not be sublet but rather should be sold on or revert to the freeholder.

The Future of Housing Benefit

- 4.73 As pointed out above, Government intervention in the housing market over the last few decades has switched from support for supply ie building and improvement to support for demand – mainly housing benefit. That has left us with the worst of both worlds - no resources for new build and a politically vulnerable escalating bill on benefits. The current trend in the level of Housing Benefit is politically and financially unsustainable yet millions of households rely on it for their housing costs. The incorporation of Housing Benefit into Universal Credit is not going to resolve the problem. The computerisation of HB to become the 'Housing Element' of the new Universal Credit is reportedly not going well. The wise move would be to consider Housing Benefit as part of Housing Policy – not as part of the Benefits system. Machinery of Government in Whitehall, the Devolved Administrations and London need to reflect that change and all housing budgets brought under one static direction at those levels.
- 4.74 Obviously families in need would need protection through the process and change would have to be gradual.

An absolutely key part of a national Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy would be rebalancing expenditure towards supply and improvement and away from benefits with changes in machinery of government at all levels to reflect that. This would need to be a twenty year strategy but an incoming government would need to start work immediately.

Quality of Housing

- 4.75 Most of the above discussion has been about the quantity of housing needed. But it is also important to emphasise the need for new build to reach meet high quality standards. Existing British housing stock is one of the oldest in the world with 20% being built pre 1919 and 49% before 1945 - which accounts for some of the poor standards; but even some relatively recent property in all tenures falls below standards in other European countries. For instance we have the lowest space/person ratio in Western Europe and we have one of the worst levels of energy efficiency in Northern Europe (whose climate is roughly the same as ours) which adds escalating energy costs to high costs of housing.

For new build high minimum standards need to be specified in relation to space, insulation, heating systems and safety. For both social and private rented accommodation there needs to be

an obligation to retro fit as far as possible to meet current Decent Homes standards, and effective inspection to ensure those standards are maintained.

The Capacity of the Construction Sector

- 4.76 There is widespread doubt about whether the sector is capable of rising to the challenge of a serious housebuilding programme of the order of 250,000 new dwellings. The construction industry – and housebuilding within that – had been one of the worst hit parts of the economy during the recession with substantial redundancies and spare capacity. With the beginnings of recovery there are now signs of strain with problems of access to finance, capacity problems in the building materials side and skill shortages – particularly those most relevant to housebuilding like bricklayers – are beginning to appear.
- 4.77 Previous periods of rapid expansion of housebuilding in the fifties and sixties was largely carried through by thousands of small local building firms. The current sector is dominated by five large housebuilders – Barratt, Persimmon, Taylor Wimpey plus Berkeley Group and Bellway, each of whom have their relationships with the mortgage sector - and 60% of all housebuilding is done by only 25 companies. Not all of the big companies have been helpful in their treatment of workers and relations with trade unions. Nevertheless to meet the ambitious target, deals will have to be done with each of the big six as well as mobilising more, smaller builders to expand or to enter the market.

The incoming government will have to be prepared to negotiate with the large housebuilders on issues covering house building targets, employment and skill levels and a stable supply chain. Priority in advances of bank loans to smaller building contractors needs to be signalled from the Bank of England. And the industry and government need to upgrade construction industry training throughput.

The Institutions

- 4.78 In addition to setting new targets, allocating budgets and mobilising new sources of funds for affordable housing there needs to be a rethink about the institutions that impact on housing supply and demand and the innovations that are needed. This probably is second legislative session business.
- 4.79 This includes considering the future role of the **Housing and Communities Agency** which at present has an uncomfortable dual role as a Regulator of the Social Landlord sector and the channel of funding to social housing.
- 4.80 Also to be considered whether we need in addition to corralling all housing responsibilities into one Department we need standing **Commission on Affordable Housing** at arms length from Government but looking at the long term provision in all forms of tenure at costs that are affordable.
- 4.81 More radically it also includes looking at the possibility of establishing a **Housing Investment Bank** – perhaps with a wider infrastructure remit as a **National Investment Bank**. The example of KfW in Germany and BNG in the Netherlands are often cited and both institutions have amongst other things provided substantial finance for the housing sector.

A new Housing Strategy will need new and changed institutions. Inevitably these take time to put in place and the initial stages of any new strategy will have to be delivered via existing institutions. An early start needs to be made, however, on the legislative base for new institutions.

5 The Wider Issues

This Section considers the position of housing in wider policy areas and how interventions from government on housing can help or hinder wider objectives.

Quality, Community and Environment

- 5.1 Much of the above discussion has been about numbers of individual homes that are needed. That is important but it is equally important that the crude numbers are delivered as high quality housing – and architecturally part of an aesthetically high quality built environment. And also even more importantly as part of a functioning multi faceted mixed tenure community. There are too many historic examples here and round the world of rapid development leaving architecturally diminished townscapes, socially polarised communities and dysfunctional local economies. A step change in the level of new build has to be holistically planned and delivered to avoid the disasters of the past.
- 5.2 The building of these homes needs to be done in a resource efficient and energy efficient way so that the construction as well as future use of the homes is as close to carbon neutral as is possible.

Housing and the Economy

- 5.3 It is also important that the economic and political case for a massive increase in house building is made on the widest basis. Investment in housing has a multiplier effect on the economy in terms of jobs and the revival of manufacturing. One pound spent on housing construction has about a £3 multiplier effect on the economy.
- 5.4 The over concentration of domestic savings and investment in the high priced housing market deprives the rest of the economy of investment into industry and infrastructure and helps create serious economic imbalances.
- 5.5 The ability to re-house thousands of people currently facing overcrowding, cramped and unhygienic conditions and homelessness will save significant money over time in improved physical and mental health and less pressure on the NHS and social services.

Housing and Welfare Reform

- 5.6 Reliance on soaring levels of housing benefit has distorted out whole social security system and made it a target for those forces who do not believe in social support and redistribution via the state. If we can reduce the long term affordability crisis in housing over time we will not only divert expenditure on housing benefit into constructive investment but also reduce welfare bills more widely and restore public confidence in our social security system.

6 A Programme for an Incoming Government

The incoming government from 2015 will need to make affordable housing a central part of its economic and social strategy. Some of the strategic institutional and legislative changes will take time to put into effect but the intention needs to be clear from the start with some legislative commitments and an immediate emergency programme.

The Target

- 6.1 In order to meet the backlog and provide for future levels of household formation this Affordable Housing Strategy will need to set a target for new dwellings to be made available every year for the next 20 years will need to be around 300,000 pa.
- 6.2 Of those 30,000 per year – possibly higher in the early years – could be met by a rigorous pursuit of refurbishment of empty property and other conversions. There is also some scope for reallocation of social housing lettings to reflect more appropriate space needs but this should be done in a planned way with consent – rather than by the ‘bedroom tax’ approach.

The remainder will need to be achieved through a massive increase in housing new build with a target of at least 250,000pa. Of this total a minimum of 80,000pa should be for social housing

Strategic Delivery Solutions

- 6.3 To start with, tackling the dysfunctions in each of the housing sectors will have to be done via existing institutions - with a broad central role for local authorities – and within existing legislation and tight expenditure constraints. But delivery of this level of new housing provision will only be achieved over the medium term if new institutions are established by Government for policy making and strategic delivery.

Strategic Changes in Housing Support and Housing Benefit

The merger of responsibility and resourcing of housing benefit and housing support into overall policy making body and one budget under the oversight of one Department in England and in each of the Devolved Administrations.

- 6.4 In total the Government spend about £30bn per year on all aspects of housing of which £24bn is on Housing Benefit. What are currently almost entirely separate policies for housing support and for housing benefit need to be brought together and the resources and expenditure under those programmes reprioritised steadily over time so that most resources move from welfare support to capital support for new build in all sectors of housing and for maintenance and management of the social sector. That will require a sustained twenty year programme to effect the switch.

Devolution and City Regions

The creation of City Region Housing Commissions in England with strategic responsibility for delivering Adequate levels of affordable housing within each of the proposed City Regions, with equivalent arrangements in each of the devolved administrations and for rural areas of England.

- 6.5 All parties are theoretically committed to greater devolution within England and to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Labour Party is specifically committed to creating new city Regions. Having abolished Regional targets, the Coalition in their Localism Act seemed to go some way to

giving local authorities a more strategic role on housing - on planning, on land, on assessment of need and on social housing but this was not followed through with real powers and resources. In the years where there was the most substantial level of building of new homes local authorities used to have major housing departments, Architects Departments and Direct Labour Organisations. Most of this no longer exists. Moreover housing needs often transcends local authority boundaries and the so called duty to cooperate amongst local authorities has not yet been seen to work. If City Regions are to be established they should have Housing Commissions with powers and resources devolved from Westminster and pooled between local authorities. The exact format will depend on wider decisions on City Regions but the City Region Housing Commissions responsibilities and powers should include:

- To assess the demand for all forms of housing within the City Region/travel to work area;
- To engage with local authorities in the major planning decisions for residential housing of all types and regeneration of communities;
- To have power themselves to raise capital on the market for investment in all forms of affordable housing.
- To enter partnerships with housing associations and private developers to deliver new affordable housing of all kinds;
- To take over and deploy all available public land for residential buildings and related facilities;
- To take over and manage all existing social housing and responsibility for HRA and Housing Waiting lists in the City Region area.
- To have powers of compulsory acquisition of empty property and land needed for affordable housing.
- To operate with the local authorities so that decisions on housing planning strategy , future social housing rents, the operation of RTB etc relate to the housing needs of the total area.

Rural Housing Commissions

- 6.6 There will also need to be a step change in the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. That will also mean parallel development of new delivery mechanisms for English rural areas that can overcome land and nimby problems and start building affordable housing in our villages and small towns – probably in the form of a new Rural Development Commission (or commissions).

The Immediate Emergency Programme

- 6.7 The incoming Government should start to move immediately to institute at least the following measures in the first eighteen months.

Immediately

- 6.8 **Designate a Single Government Department and a Single secretary of State responsible for all housing matters**

Change in Whitehall needs to start immediately although they will take time to deliver effectively. Start by designating a senior Minister to deal with the logistics and within a year move to a single budget and Department covering all issues relating to housing: responsibility and funding for housing policy and planning from DCLG, Housing Benefit from DWP and the construction Sector from BIS.

- 6.9 **Announce immediately a halt on the incorporation of Housing Benefit into the Universal Credit system**

Housing benefit needs to be seen as part of housing policy and a long term move is needed away from revenue support via benefit towards support for housing provision. That switch can only be made over the long term but once Housing Benefit is incorporated into Universal Credit albeit as a distinct Housing Element it will be difficult to disentangle it.

6.10 Integrate and Redirect Support Schemes : From Help to Buy - to Help to Build

The range of disparate support schemes need to be brought together and half the level of guarantees and underwriting directed at support for finance to build – by councils, housing associations and the private developers and the other half continue to underwrite support to buy.

6.11 Initiate a Fundamental Review of Affordable Rents and the Affordable Homes Programme

An urgent Review is needed on the basis for a new strategy for social housing which will leave rents 'affordable' in the literal sense without the average family in normal times depending on housing benefit.

6.12 Stalled Developments

Housing developments which already have planning permission should be started within six months or else the planning permission is revoked and passed to another developer.

6.13 Local Authority Borrowing Powers for Housing

Treasury should adopt international standards for definition of Net Public Sector Borrowing and General Government Financial Deficit which would have the effect of excluding Local Authority borrowing for housing development from general government borrowing. At the same time Treasury should allow a write down of the inflated historic debt provision when HRA reform was finally introduced; and introduce earmarked Housing Bonds for any future Quantitative Easing. Taken together these provisions would significantly increase the ability to borrow to invest in all forms of housing.

6.14 Mortgage Market Stability

The FCA should be asked urgently to review the mortgage market – including the Buy to Let market - with a view to introducing measures to achieve greater long term stability to the market.

6.15 Pension Fund Investment in Housing

Discuss with Pension Funds the need for higher levels of investment in affordable housing and consider whether legislation is needed to incentivise pension funds to allocate a minimum proportion of investments to affordable housing.

6.16 Construction Industry

Discuss with both the leading and smaller housebuilders, banks and mortgage providers and the CITB problems of finance and skilled labour shortage that would be encountered with a substantially higher housebuilding programme and the solutions needed to overcome those shortages.

Programme for the First Legislative Session

6.17 Empty Homes and Conversions

Legislate to give Local authorities a new power to impose penal Council Tax and to acquire compulsorily and refurbish homes that have been empty for more than six months continuously, including office blocks suitable for conversion and second homes that are continuously empty.

6.18 Regulation for the Private Rented Sector

Introduce legislation requiring local authorities to introduce Registration of private landlords with rules requiring minimum quality of premises and protecting tenants from arbitrary rent increases and eviction. With reserve powers to regulate rents.

6.19 **Right to Buy**

Legislate to ensure that all future RTB sales are replaced like for like and done for one by new social housing; and that all sales and discount offers have to be judged by the local authority against the housing needs of the area; and adjust criteria of eligibility.

6.20 **Planning Framework**

Review the National Planning Framework to ensure that local authorities have the responsibility to assess housing needs and pursue policies to provide for balanced communities with mixed forms of tenure; amend legislation to ensure that all major housing developments include a quotient of social housing under section 106 or CIL equivalent arrangements.

6.21 **Housing Quality**

Increase support for improved housing design enhance Building Regs and Planning Regulations for new build and significant improvements on design, building fabric space provision, energy efficiency and safety.

Possible Programme for Second or Third Legislative Session

6.22 **Disentangle Regulation and Funding**

Disband the HCA and establish an **Affordable Housing Commission** for England for channelling Central Government funding. And **Rented Housing Regulator** to oversee regulation of rental provision at local level for both the private and the social sector and deal with appeals from local level.

6.23 **New Towns**

If after having considered the practicality and cost of establishing New Towns in the English Regions it is decided to go ahead, legislation will be needed to deal with planning issues and deliver the New Towns.

6.24 **A Housing Bank**

If it is decided to establish a specialist Housing Bank that too would need legislation.

7 But can we afford it??

In the present context any proposals for increased expenditure on housing – or anything – is faced with the objection that the country cannot afford it.

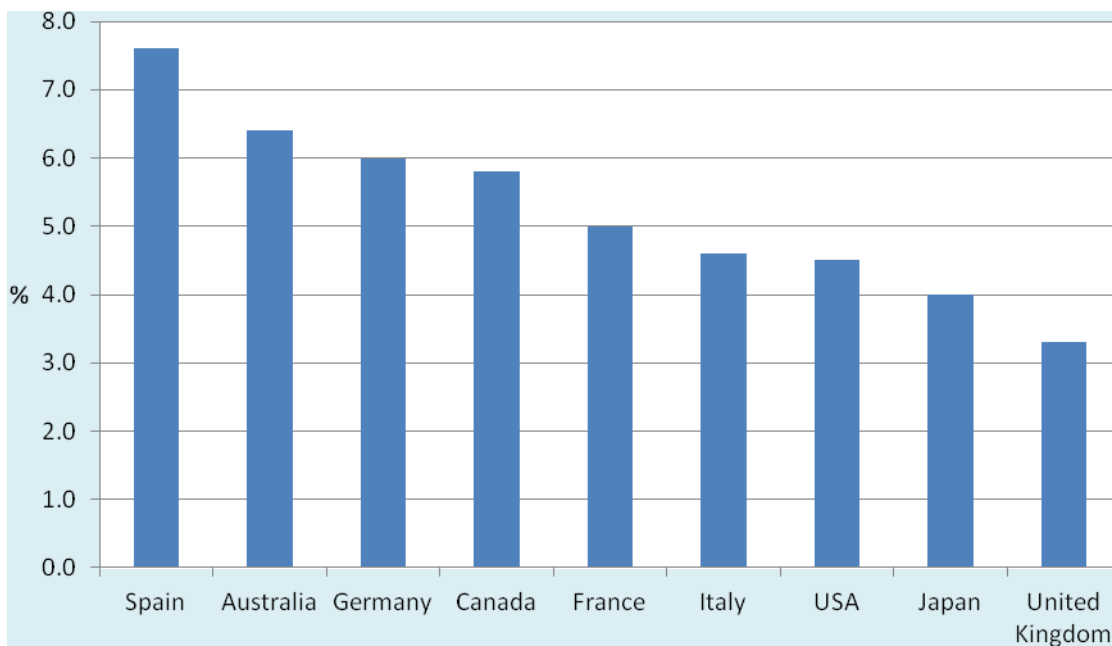
In terms of public expenditure the constraints arise from immediate budgetary considerations and arbitrary rules and definitions – as for example the definition of the public borrowing requirement. These may be important politically and presentationally but they are essentially short term or artificial constraints. But housing needs are for a lifetime and buildings themselves may last 100 years and more..

If we look at the real constraint - whether the economy and society as a whole can afford the resources - we can only look at two measures:

- what comparable countries can achieve; and
- what we have achieved in the past.

In terms of comparable countries, the UK spends the lowest proportion of our GDP on housing infrastructure.

Chart L: International Comparison of Percentage of GDP spent on Housing Infrastructure – Average 1996-2011



In terms of our past performance relative to our population and wealth at the time it is clear that we have seriously underperformed on housing for decades.

Table 14: Number of Dwellings Completed as compared to Population and GDP 1920s to 2010s

Decade	Ratio of House Completions per 100,000 Population	Ratio of House Completions to GDP (£m)
Twenties	2.8	::
Thirties	4.6	::
Forties	3.9	31
Fifties	5.6	37
Sixties	6.2	34
Seventies	3.5	17
Eighties	3.1	11
Nineties	2.7	7
2000s	2.3	6
2010s	2.0	4

If we could afford to build at so much faster rate through poverty, depression, postwar recovery and austerity – we can surely do so now.

Of course we can afford it.

The real issue is we cannot afford not to.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now have the housing debate and I welcome Lord Larry Whitty to the platform with us. Welcome, Larry. Congress, it gives me great pleasure to do that. Larry is no stranger to the GMB but much has changed since he was here at our last Congress, hasn't it, Larry?

At the start of his working career Larry was a civil servant at the Ministry of Technology. He then came into the trades union Movement by working for the TUC in the Economic Department. In 1973, Larry moved to GMB and was head of Research and Legal Departments. He stayed with us for 12 years before becoming General Secretary of the Labour Party from 1985 to 1994. He has been a Member of the House of Lords since 1996 and has held ministerial posts in Defra, DETR, and the Foreign Office.

He has a keen interest in the environment, energy, and of course housing. He is a member of the Agriculture, Energy, and Environment Select Committee and is an active member of a number of all party parliamentary groups. Through his chairmanship of the campaign organisation Housing Voice, he chaired an independent inquiry into the Affordable Homes Crisis. It is with this great insight into housing that Larry researched and produced the Housing Report for the CEC that is before you today. He will now give us an introduction to the background, findings, and recommendations in the report. Larry, please address, Congress. *(Applause)*

LORD LARRY WHITTY ADDRESSED CONGRESS

LORD WHITTY: Thanks very much, Mary. Madam President, I should say. Things have changed a bit because I can remember when your Madam President was a very stropy delegate, but there we go. Times change. It is 30 years since you last met me on this platform. I am really pleased to be back. Thank you very much for inviting me.

Thirty years is about the same time that successive governments have seriously screwed up our housing policy. It is a key trade union issue. There will be, shall we say, the more mature delegates in this hall

who were able in their own family life to gain some security either in a council home or by being able to afford a mortgage on a modest salary. Those days have gone. In many parts of the country neither option is available to people on average let alone low incomes. We do indeed face a serious housing crisis.

I am very grateful to the CEC for asking me to help produce a report. My qualifications may be limited except that I have made no real secret of seeing housing as one of the biggest failures of the last Labour government and one that has got worse since. The report looks at the history and looks at the economics, and it looks at the politics, and it looks at the consequences of the housing crisis. There is a lot of detail in the history and it does put it in perspective, and people who are interested need to look at it because we can learn from the past.

On the economics, it is fairly straightforward. It is a pretty basic rule of economics that if demand seriously outstrips supply, then prices will go up and they will continue to go up. We have a situation in this country where the rate of household formation, new households, is growing at about 260,000 a year, and the number of houses we are building is 120,000. The natural consequence of that, apart from the social consequences of overcrowding and eventually homelessness, is that we need to build now 250,000 to 300,000 new houses and at least 300,000 in order to deal with the backlog. That is key economic factor number one.

Key economic factor number two is that workers, GMB members, who are dependent only on their own wages will never be able to afford a mortgage in the market in the South East and in London, and indeed in many other cities, unless we seriously reform the whole of the housing market.

The key conclusion from that is that we need a strong and publicly-funded and local authority delivered public housing sector to be revived, and that requires a major new role for the local authorities. The politics of this for the last 30 years have been all wrong. Up until the '70s, although there was a lot of ideological sideswiping at council housing and rent regulation and so forth, in practice both Conservative and Labour governments supported home ownership and supported council housing. The level of build was twice what it is currently. That consensus ended in the '80s. We had antagonism to councils in general and to council housing in particular, and the development of right-to-buy and of sell off of council property. On the mortgage side, we have had lax financial regulation which has allowed over-borrowing in the mortgage market to allow huge price increases.

We had, I am afraid, a continued policy of distrust into the period of the last Labour government, distrust of local government, so much so that it was the government's policy to press for stock transfer away from local authorities, mainly to housing associations, or transfer of management to ALMOs. Sometimes that has worked out for the benefit of the tenants; often it has not. It is true that some Labour housing ministers did recognise the cul-de-sac that the housing market was going through but they never stayed long enough to do anything serious about it. At the end of the Labour government we did not have a great legacy to point to and we need to do better next time.

Of course, the Coalition have made it a lot worse. They cut expenditure on social housing by 60% in their first year. The quantitative easing was developed for all sorts of things except house building. A large number of government schemes are directed at boosting demand not supply of housing. They are moving even further than the Labour government to the marketisation of social rents and they have distorted and diluted planning so that the old section 106 requirements that they have a minimum level of social housing in big developments have been effectively abandoned.

There are serious social consequences of this which is spelled out in the report, price bubbles, record waiting lists, generation rent, out of control housing benefit. What has happened is that as costs have

gone up the housing benefit costs have soared but it has also led to problems on the ground, an increased polarisation of housing type and tenure. That is the exact opposite of what Nye Bevan was looking for when he was Health and Housing Minister in the '40s. His words were quoted the last time the GMB, 10 years ago, had a housing document before Congress.

What Nye Bevan wanted to see was streets that were tapestries where the doctor, the grocer, the butcher, and the agricultural labourer, lived side by side. We are a long way from that. The grocer has gone and been replaced by a supermarket. The shop assistants in the supermarket are probably dependent on the private renting sector with rents going through the roof. The butcher, if he is lucky, is struggling to pay the mortgage. The doctor has disappeared and gone to live in a gated estate on the other side of town. The agricultural worker is probably living in a caravan, an overcrowded caravan, provided by your local friendly gangmaster. That vision has not been delivered.

We have some interesting and important mixed tenure developments but, frankly, the subletting that has followed right-to-buy in some areas has meant that we are now paying for social housing at exorbitant rent through housing benefit. Just this week we have had several examples, certainly in Central London, in Chelsea, where until very recently we have had adequate social housing side by side with streets where the only first-time buyers are Russian oligarchs but I read in the paper this week that certain estates are going to be knocked down and replaced by high-cost private housing.

This all has an effect on housing benefit. In the '70s, 95% of what the Government paid for on housing was to get houses built or improved. Now, 95% of what the Government spend on housing is housing benefit. We need to switch that subsidy so that over the next 10 years or so it moves back to supporting the building and improvement of housing. We need to do that for wider reasons as well. The *Daily Mail* sniping at those who are on housing benefit is not really because they are not in need but it is because their landlords, and indeed some social landlords as well, have put rents up so much that housing benefit has increased. The number of people claiming household benefit, the majority of the increase has been amongst those who are in work, not the so-called work-shy shirkers that George Osborne loves to slag off.

The report stresses that all sectors of the housing market are inter-independent and policies need to cover all of them and they need to cover the whole strategy. We need to abandon the antagonism to local authorities from Labour as well as Tory central government, and above all from the Treasury. We need to see local government as both planners and a significant part of the delivery of affordable homes. The term "affordable" has become a bit Orwellian newspeak because affordable rents now mean 80% of the private rent, even in Central Manchester and Central London, and affordable private houses start at £300,000. We need a new term or a redefinition of "affordable", but we can do it.

We do need to abandon some of these shibboleths and we probably need to abandon some of the shibboleths of our own as well. The council intervention does not necessarily just mean in building council houses, it means partnerships with housing associations, partnerships with the private developers, developing all kinds of housing so we get genuinely mixed areas of tenure as Nye Bevan foresaw; and we need a more nuanced position on right-to-buy. The real problem with right-to-buy is that money was not recycled in replacing right-to-buy properties one for one. That is the key issue we need to get in.

The document begins to set out a strategy and it is in the front of the document. I am not going to repeat it all. We need a minimum target of 250,000 new build, at least 80,000 of which must be social housing, primary council housing, plus around 30,000 mobilisation of the scandal of empty homes. We need a long-term strategy of switching housing benefit to support for housing supply and we need all housing brought into one government department in Whitehall and in the devolved administrations.

There are a number of immediate moves that the Government can make and they do need to start on that programme with the existing institutions and they need to review the mortgage market as well to restart the social housing market. They also need a first-year legislative programme to set up new institutions. I am arguing for city region housing commissions to deliver the programme across local authority boundaries. Most local authorities do not deal with the full housing market according to their boundaries and in many cases the travel to work area covers more than one local authority.

We need powers for local authorities to have a compulsory acquisition of land where there is planning permission but the development has stalled; and for acquiring homes which have been empty for more than 12 months. We need the regulation of the private rented sector and that regulation to be implemented at local level and include, where necessary, regulation of the level of rents. And we need changes to planning law so that we do require every major development to have significant parts devoted to social housing. We need some action also in the rural areas because it is not just the inner cities where people find it impossible to pay for a house on the wages that are paid in those areas. Beyond that we may need a housing bank, and we may need new towns and we may need a new regulator.

This is quite a programme, Congress, but it is deliverable and it is realistic, and there are some signs that the Labour Party is moving in our direction. Over the weekend, Sir Michael Lyons, who is doing a job for the Labour Party, made some very similar noises, as did the IPPR. It is vital that the GMB now gives such a strategy an extra push.

The report ends on this, it ends by facing up to the question which is always asked and not just by the Treasury, can we afford it. We point out that there is no shortage of land in this country. We can build the number of houses that we need without concreting over the countryside and without seriously endangering the Green Belt. We point out that our forebears in much, much more difficult economic and social times following a war, through austerity, through depression, built much larger numbers of houses at much lower levels of gross national income than we have. We also pointed out that most of our neighbours in countries which are similar to us have managed to spend more on house building than we do.

The construction industry also needs to be mobilised. It needs to have the skills and the people but it also needs to have the strategy which focuses on affordable housing and not on high-value flats in Central London populated by corporations and ex pats and gated estates in the suburbs.

We have the land, in the construction industry we have the men and women, and we have the money, too, so let's ensure that the next Labour government actually gets on with it and the GMB by adopting something like this document today will give them a good push in that direction. Thank you, Congress.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Larry. Congress, we now come to the third of our special reports. I will now explain how I intend to stake the debate. The special report will be moved and seconded on behalf of the CEC, regions will be invited to come in on the debate, and then we move to a vote on the report. The CEC Special Report will be moved and seconded on behalf of the CEC by John McDonnell to move and Penny Robinson to second. Hi, John.

BRO. J. McDONNELL (CEC, Manufacturing): Good afternoon. President, Congress, visitors, speaking on behalf of the CEC and proud to be moving the Special Report. There are few bigger issues facing our country than the housing crisis, with the number of new households growing at twice the rate of the buildings. In England alone 1.8 million people are waiting for social housing, an increase of 87% since

1997. The evil bedroom tax is hitting hard those who have a roof over their heads as this Government sees it more than they are entitled to. All the while millionaires, who built a housing empire on the back of the right-to-buy, sit back and wait for taxpayers' money to line their ever bulging pockets; no such thing as too many bedrooms for them.

Congress, enough is enough. In one of the richest countries of the world it cannot be right that tonight 2,500 people, five times the number of people in this room, will not be just homeless they will be sleeping rough on the streets. It cannot be right that tonight tens of thousands of parents will tuck their children into bed in temporary accommodation wondering where they will sleep tomorrow. It cannot be right that as I speak 3.6 million children are forced to live in poverty after the rent has been paid. But, Congress, we also have to be honest. This did not happen overnight. Successive governments, including Labour, have failed on housing. Now it is time for change and this report shows us exactly how it can happen.

Thirty years ago we spent 80% of our housing budget on building houses. Today it is just 5%. The rest goes on housing benefit, billions of pounds each year not going into building homes for people to live in but in the pockets of private landlords, billions spent on subsidising the rents of working people who face private rented sector with inflated prices, little security, where they could lose their homes with just a few weeks' notice. That is what we are talking about, people's homes. Think about that for a second, a home, not just a house. It is where you lay your head after a shift, where you raise your children, it is Christmas, and birthdays, World Cup matches, Saturday nights in front of X Factor, a place that is safe, familiar, and always there. That security should be a right not a privilege for those who can afford it.

We need to tackle this crisis by building more houses, and dare we say council houses too, by cracking down on rogue landlords, ending the landlords' subsidy, tackling the ever growing scandal of empires built on the right-to-buy, and buy to let. We won't just build homes, we will help young people and those who need a second chance to succeed in education; we will reduce antisocial behaviour, lift families out of poverty, reduce health inequalities, and help millions of working people live better, safer, happier lives, where their life chances are not determined by their post code or bank balance.

To those who say we cannot afford it, the Labour Government in 1945 had a few things on its plate and I had experience of that, I was 12 at the time. I remember the food rationing and the fuel shortages, up to our eyeballs in debt to America, houses being bombed, people living with other families, but even in these economic times, times tougher than that, the Atlee government created our NHS, built millions of new homes, and put in place our welfare state. So, I will not accept for a moment that a Labour government could not act. If they did just half of what Aneurin Bevan and Attlee did then we would be on our way and the people who are not for Labour would come on board, if they had done the job they were elected to do. Of £25bn in housing benefits a year, half is going into the pockets and the offshore tax havens of blood sucking, money grabbing bastards. That is what they are, blood sucking, money grabbing bastards they are. (*Applause*) This is not about being able to afford to build houses; it is a case that we cannot afford not to.

Congress, this report follows years of work by our Union to put housing on the agenda. Our work has generated headlines in the press, it has exposed scandal, and unfairness across the country. It has showed our members that we care, that we listen, and we know what they are up against. This report is the next step. It is a way forward. It is a blueprint for change on the entire housing system that no politician, or political party, can afford to ignore. I recommend it to you. Please vote and support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. Penny.

SIS. P. ROBINSON (CEC, Public Services): I am seconding the CEC Special Report on Housing. Congress, this report is important. I represent workers in Barking & Dagenham and our borough is one of the poorest in London. Too many people there work too hard for too little and find there is more month than money left after every payday. We have one of the highest proportions of private renters in London who rely on housing benefit to pay the bills. We have a pretty long social housing waiting list, too. Sometimes when I walk around the wards where our members live I cannot believe we had 13 years of a Labour government; in some places it certainly does not look like it.

With this mob in No. 10, each and every day things get tougher for people where I live and the people I represent, and therein lays one of the biggest challenges we face in our area. People do not believe that any politician understands where they are from and what they need. Far too many people in Barking & Dagenham utter the words, "They're all the same." For us that led to the rise of the British National Party because when people are insecure in their own lives, when they are angry at how hard life is, they look for someone to blame and the BNP in my area ruthlessly use the housing crisis to peddle racism and hate in our communities, vilifying asylum seekers for jumping the housing queue, and telling local people that the reason their daughter or son could not get a council house was because of immigration. It did not matter that the very houses they spoke about had been sold under right-to-buy years ago, or that they were in terrible condition, being rented out at extortionate prices by buy-to-let landlords, who, I would hazard a guess, had never even been to Dagenham.

Now in the era of the bedroom tax, of benefit caps, of social cleansing in London, and a housing bubble that at some point will implode, the Tories seek to do exactly what they did last time they were in power, divide our communities and set the working classes against each other, pitting those out of work against those who do have a job, those in the public sector against private sector workers, the young against the old.

Congress, where the Tories seek to divide our society to play one working person off against another, we seek to unite it. That is what his report is about. It is about hope for communities. It is about security for working people, for families, pensioners and the most vulnerable alike, and most of all it is good old-fashioned commonsense. We beat back the BNP in Barking & Dagenham, but now UKIP are knocking at the door. The time for action is now. This report shows us how to make it happen. Please support.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Penny. Congress, this is Penny's first speech on behalf of the CEC. She has just been elected onto the Executive, so well done, Penny. (Applause) Thanks very much, Penny, you did well. We will give you the red card next time! Does any region wish to come in and speak in the debate? No? Oh, I thought I was getting away with it! Come on.

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire) speaking in support of the CEC Special Report on Housing, said: President, Congress, in his report of 1942 Lord Beveridge identified squalor as one of the five evils to be defeated in the post war world and so it seemed for over 30 years as successive governments, Tory and Labour, took pride in the amount of good quality homes they built. I am not naïve to believe that everything was a bed of roses. Big mistakes were made, like the concrete tower blocks that benefited the ego of architects and the bank balances of builders rather than helping the actual tenants, but at least things seemed to be moving towards a better future. But since 1979, and the Thatcher government, the state has retreated from being both a provider of housing and of protecting tenants. The market is seen as a best provider but as James Murray said in his class paper, *Time to Step In*, the market is much more complex than that. This is a market that led to evictions by 18th century landlords, jerry-built slums in the 19th century, and landlords like Rackman in the 20th century. If we have a look at this report, it shows us the way to go, that decent housing is a right, not a privilege, and if rent control is like

something from Venezuela what a sad indictment to this country when the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is showing us the way to go.

A big part of solving this problem, as this report makes out, is to provide the correct type of housing, at the correct prices, and in the correct places. Building them is a no-brainer. How many jobs are going to be created and how low is the benefits bill going to be? Congress, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire is happy to support this report. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: You took a long time to get there, Ian.

BRO. G. HARVEY (Birmingham & West Midlands) speaking in support of the motion, said: This is just to say, as John said, can we afford it. The real issue is that we cannot afford not to afford it. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you.

SIS. L. MERCER (North West & Irish) supporting the report, said: Sustainable, safe, reliable, affordable, and accessible housing, that is what the people I help ask for. These are the most vulnerable in our society. They lose their homes because they become disabled or have other health issues. They can no longer work. Some are forced to move from an adapted property or end up with rent arrears due to the bedroom tax. Some struggle to understand universal credits and the effect it has on their rent. We find it increasingly difficult to find good quality affordable houses. Many homes we visit are poor quality and some are that small they call them sheds, because they are sheds. They are damp, with infestations, poor heating and lighting, and add to this the rife problem of drug pushers and hate crime. It is no easy task. I ask this Congress to carry on supporting this report, give local authorities increased powers of enforcement, increase the rights of private tenants, build better, safer, accessible, and affordable houses with space in them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Well done.

BRO. A. DE-BANKS (GMB Wales and South West) speaking on the CEC Special Report on Housing, said: Madam President, Congress, my region welcomes an extensive and extremely well researched report which clearly sets out the enormity of the social housing crisis afflicting Britain today. It ably documents the legacy of the Thatcherite right-to-buy programme and the consequences for the housing market supply and affordability, as well as the impact upon the cohesiveness of family life.

Congress, decades of under-investment in this nation's housing stock and the opportunism by unscrupulous private landlords has led to this major decline in availability and to the worst excesses of the Tory free market, all under the guise of corporate welfare. This scandal of the sucking up of our taxes by the rich and the powerful who care more about their bank balances than for the hardworking families trying to climb onto the housing ladder has been exposed by our Union for what it is. It is a method for the funding of castle-owning barons who invest their profits in offshore tax havens and the Tory Party. As demand for new housing continues to outstrip supply, hardship and exploitation increasingly becomes a natural order of things with escalating homelessness and destitution becoming ever more commonplace. It is brutally evident that for decades successive governments have failed when it comes to discharging their social responsibilities in the area of social housing.

Congress, there is no way that this country can afford not to address this problem; our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less. My region both compliments and commends the report to Congress. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Aaron. Well done. I will now put the Special Report on Housing to Congress. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried unanimously. Well done.

The CEC Special Report on Housing was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Now Congress I am going to put something to you. Don't hang me. As the report that Larry has done is so comprehensive it takes into consideration a great deal of issues in some of these motions. Is any region prepared to refer – I did not say withdraw, I said refer – their resolutions in favour of the report? Who said yes? Southern, yes. I will call them out: Southern Region? (*Agreed*) South West?

All right, let's start again: Composite 23, GMB Wales and SW Region? (*Agreed*) Southern Region? (*Agreed*)

Okay, Composite 24, Midland Region? Yes? (*Agreed*) Yorkshire Region? (*Agreed*)

241, London Region? Yes? (*Agreed*) Thank you.

Composite 25, Yorkshire Region? (*Agreed*) London Region? (*Agreed*) Thank you.

Composite 26, Southern Region? (*Agreed*) London Region? (*Agreed*)

246 Regulate Landlords, Yorkshire Region? Yes? (*Agreed*)

247, Birmingham Region? (*Agreed*)

Do you know, you are wonderful. We will not call any CEC speaker. We weren't going to have one, anyway. Anyway, can I say thanks to all of you for that and a special thanks to Larry. A lot of work has gone into that report. If you have not read it from cover to cover, please do sit and read it. It is the most comprehensive that I have known that's been around, and I don't read many books.

Every single one of those resolutions will be taken and argued with a policy that we have just passed. Okay? They are not lost. They are going to be part of that debate.

Composite Motion 23 was REFERRED

Composite Motion 24 was REFERRED

Motion 241 was REFERRED

Composite Motion 25 was REFERRED

Composite Motion 26 was REFERRED

Motion 246 was REFERRED

Motion 247 was REFERRED

THE PRESIDENT: I am now going to say to Larry, what did he call me, stropky? I'm not half as bleedin' stropky as he was. He used to cut the resolutions that we put in. Right? A hatchet man I christened him, but he's nice! Larry, come and take a gift.

(Presentation amid applause)

SOCIAL POLICY: GENERAL

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will move on to Item 9, which is Social Policy: General, and Composite 16, Birmingham Region to move and second.

PAYDAY LOANS AND EXCESSIVE INTEREST RATES COMPOSITE MOTION 16

C16. Covering Motions:

170. PAYDAY LOANS (*Birmingham & West Midlands Region*)

171. EXCESSIVE INTEREST RATES (*Birmingham & West Midlands Region*)

PAYDAY LOANS AND EXCESSIVE INTEREST RATES

This Conference is appalled at the excessive interest rates charged by payday lenders. These greedy firms are making a financial killing from exploiting low paid workers who take out loans to make ends meet and end up with spiralling debts because they struggle to pay back the loan at the end of the term thus incurring more interest on the loan. These companies are charging its customers interest rates in excess of 1000% APR plus.

This Conference therefore calls upon the GMB union using all of its contacts politically and in the wider trade union movement, to continue to mount its campaign against the extortionate interest rates charged by payday loan companies.

Conference urges the CEC to secure legislation that restricts Payday lenders to interest rates at RPI +10% and start planning this action at the end of this week.

Birmingham & West Midlands Region to Move Birmingham & West Midlands Region to Second

(Carried)

BRO. G. BOULD (*Birmingham & West Midlands*): I want Congress just to picture a lifejacket on a plane. A payday loan is a bit like that, I suppose, in some ways, something you hope you will never have to use but for many that is not the case, unfortunately. If we cut a little bit beneath the veneer and have a look at payday loans, what do we find? Getting your money early: is that good? A fast approval process: is that good? No credit history required. Quick repayments. No collateral. One setback: the huge interest rates that have to be paid, in some situations 300 or 400% on what you borrow. Really, folks are often between a rock and a hard place, if they are on low pay, if they are unemployed, if they have fallen on hard times, if their employer is not paying the living wage, and plus there is often a fee on top of this. It is in the fine print, another 15-20%. The composite motion calls to build a campaign politically and within the wider trades union Movement to secure legislation that restricts. I think we owe it to our people to do that and to promote affordable credit. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Graham. Secunder.

BRO. S. GARRETT (*Birmingham & West Midlands*): Vice President, Congress, first time delegate and speaker. *(Applause)* The constant barrage of advertising for payday loan companies across the various media has become a symbol of a deepening crisis for millions. Advertises offering instantaneous cash transfers at the click of a button, no credit check needed, and in many cases trivialising debt, all at the

same time charging over 1,000% APR. The extortionate interest rates charged has not slowed down business for these unscrupulous lenders and debt charities, so the problem is increasing and payday loan debt is affecting more and more people. It is not for cheap credit that people are driven to use payday loans but typically it is to make ends meet, put food on the table, pay everyday bills.

The increase in payday loans has a direct relationship with government policy. Changes to welfare, a fall in wages, increases in fuel, food, and rent has pushed people onto the payday lenders. It is clear that the current government has no desire to check the falling living standards but it must be at the centre of policymaking for any future Labour government. We need fit and proper legislation that caps interest rates and protects the vulnerable from these extortionists. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sven. Mover of 172?

CREDIT UNIONS/ALTERNATIVE BANKS & PAYDAY LOANS MOTION 172

172. CREDIT UNIONS/ALTERNATIVE BANKS & PAYDAY LOANS

This Conference is appalled at the failure to control financial institutions effectively and the consequences for our members especially those struggling due to the recession.

Conference, mindful of the continuing problems with the finance and banking sector and the way in which customers are being treated by financial institutions, it is time for an alternative. We are also deeply concerned by the activities of pay day loan companies, most of whom are based overseas, who are making millions of pounds from customers from small loans taken out of necessity. In other words they are preying on the poor.

In the light of the ongoing financial crisis and the pressures faced by those who cannot afford a bank account or who are struggling with finance, we ask the GMB to actively promote the work of credit unions, especially the Thorne Credit Union, as a realistic alternative for our members. We are mindful that the work of the Thorne Credit Union has been important in supporting many people across the union who need quick access to affordable loans and short-term borrowing. We also ask the GMB nationally and regions to consider, where practical, the potential use of the Thorne Credit Union by branches. This is especially important in the light of the problems experienced with the Co-Op Bank and its relationship to the Unity Trust Bank.

Q22 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Congress, the disgrace of payday loan companies, doorstep loan sharks, and even banks, all have been found wanting. Put simply, they exploit the needs of working people, they invest in finding more ways of taking extortionate rates of interest, some of them as high as 1,000%, destroying lives and families; not just destroying them, but taking away their futures. Every 18 minutes a home will be repossessed in the UK because of debt. CAB dealt with 7,015 debt problems every day in the last year. On personal debt alone it is £163m a day is paid, that is, £59.4bn in a year. That is an average of £2,251 per household in the UK. More and more people are struggling with debt but the greed of the bankers, added to the commercial financial hawks that hover above them ready to eat the vulnerable and the poor is disgraceful. Even our beloved Cooperative Bank has lost its principles and lost its guiding way that used to underpin it.

Congress, it is time for a new model of finance. I applaud the position of the church leaders who recently came out and called financial institutions to account and the churches have decided they are going to use credit unions as the way of fighting back, and quite rightly so, the people's banks, something they have a

real stake in and they have a say in. The Thorne Credit Union was established in 1999 and it provides an important service for our members up and down this country. It provides loans at an affordable rate of interest. It encourages savings and provides a pathway to reliable and secure forms of finance and affordable finance. I know that regional secretaries recently have been sent details about the credit union. Let's see more regions backing what should be a key GMB service across this country. Delegates, pick up the leaflets, take them back with you, distribute them, and get people into the credit union movement. It is the only viable and real alternative. Branches, maybe you can think about, and subject to what happens with the National Admin Unit, I am going to suggest they take it to the branch working party to look at whether branch accounts could be a viable way to look at supporting the credit union as part of the strategy forward.

This is not theory. This can be put into practice. The Thorne Credit Union provides a pathway for us to do it. I say use it, get more in, let's double it in the next year, and let's triple it in the next three years. Let's get more and more in so there is a viable alternative. I ask you to vote for this motion and to help people who are in debt in this country. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Secunder.

BRO. D. SUTCLIFFE (North West & Irish): President, Congress, I am pleased to second this motion. It is a large section of the bank and financial institutions, as Kevin has said, that has been found wanting over the last few years. Sadly, we are still uncovering areas where the banks themselves have been distorting a fair operation of the financial markets. Where will this end? As we know, it is the banks that got us into this issue regarding the financial mess. It is now time for the GMB seriously to consider how they can join forces in order to help ordinary working people to obtain fair, affordable loans. Every day we are seeing ways in which the financial sector is selling its wares to our members. Members are bombarded daily. Members now are being asked with regard to their pension regulations; they are changing. Financial organisations will look to extract them and use them.

Congress, this calls upon the GMB to work alongside our existing credit union, Thorne Credit Union, to look at ways in which we can improve the offer of services to our members and also make them more aware of the important role the credit unions play. As has been said, a lot of regions have affiliated to and deal with Thorne Credit Union. Congress, I second this motion and ask you to vote in favour so that our members can obtain better financial support when they need it most. Maybe, Congress, we should suggest Mr. Miliband joins. He may be able to get a payday loan. He will not need the trade unions then. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Derek. Mover of 173.

PROMOTION OF CREDIT UNIONS MOTION 173

173. PROMOTION OF CREDIT UNIONS

Congress notes research has shown that reliance on pay day loans has almost doubled since 2009 with an estimated £2.2 billion being loaned in 2013. Payday loan companies target the lowest paid and most vulnerable in our society who struggle to make ends meet due to the cost of living crisis created by Coalition Government policy.

Congress notes research conducted by "Which?" in 2012 concluded that almost half those who took out payday loans could not afford the repayments with more than half missing payments.

This congress notes that Payday loans are dragging many people into a spiral of debt by taking out further loans just to get by.

This congress notes that the GMB has cultivated a positive relationship with Credit Unions.

This congress resolves to continue to promote the benefits of Credit Unions over the use of Payday loan companies.

W15 WILTSHIRE & SWINDON BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. C. WATTS (Southern): This is actually a very similar motion to your motion so I will keep this short. We all know the most vulnerable in our society are those that fall prey to payday loans and that number is going up year on year. These people are not feeling any benefit from the recovery we have been told we are having. There was a *Which?* survey in 2012 which showed that at least half the people who took out payday loans were unable to pay those loans back on time and were therefore penalised and just put into further misery. These are people in desperate circumstances; they have been let down by the financial institutions and by the Government. High street banks that are culpable for the economic situation are unrepentant as they continue to profit from the misery of others. I find it difficult to decide who is worst, actually, whether it is the payday loan companies who are actually quite up front that if you do not meet their terms they are going to screw you, or whether it is the banks who essentially since Lehman Brothers went down in 2007 have just been mired in scandal after scandal after scandal. I cannot decide which one is worse.

The question is, who do you turn to and people have discussed about the Coop Bank, the ethics of the Coop Bank have been brought into question as well. Essentially, the credit union seems to be a fantastic way to go. That is actually an ethical alternative to the £2bn legal loan shark market and the high street banks. The credit union is an important institution that will support people who need quick access to affordable loans. We ask that the GMB continue to support the Thorne Credit Union nationally and regionally and to continue to promote the benefits to individual members and to branches, and Thorne Credit Union are out there and please take their leaflets and hear what they have to say. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Christopher. Seconder.

BRO. S. OAKES (Southern): President, Congress, we have heard it all before. Due to the policies of this Coalition Government working class has been repeatedly attacked and because of these attacks an increasing number of people find themselves being literally dragged into poverty. The only way to escape this poverty is to throw themselves at the mercy of the likes of the payday loan companies. These companies, you know it, high interest rates, and basically this makes people spiral into unavoidable poverty. The only victors in this situation are these disgusting thieves. They rob people who face poverty of what little money they have left to line their greedy pockets. We need to give those who find themselves borrowing from these extortionists a choice, and that choice is plain and simple, Congress, credit unions. However, the average person knows little about credit unions. It needs to be promoted. People need a fair and ethical way of obtaining money for a crisis and they need it now. Congress, I support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steve. Could I call on Andy Worth to give a qualification on Motion 172?

BRO. A. WORTH (Regional Secretary, Midland & East Coast): The CEC is supporting Motion 172 on credit unions with a qualification. The motion expresses all that right-thinking people feel about the devastation caused by the banking and by Wonga.com, and by the payday lenders. I am being careful not to follow some of the delegates and use the vernacular here. People know I have a tendency to use that when I get passionate so I am pretending it is Sunday, President, at this moment in time.

There is a massive role for credit unions and I am proud to have been a director of the Thorne Credit Union since, I think, the second year of its inauguration. I would urge you personally to get involved, to go and take the leaflets and find out about credit unions. Anything that stops Wonga making a few more quid, to put it politely, must be worth examining. The credit union is now available for all the regions but it is a matter for the individual regions to make that decision. Again, I would encourage regional secretaries to take a look and talk to the delegates. I am sure colleagues from the four regions that are presently involved would be happy to have that dialogue as well. North West, Yorkshire, Southern, and my own region are involved with that. Clearly, people at the stand will talk to you about it.

Colleagues, what happened in the Coop Bank is a scandal and I am pleased that the GMB is working with other trade unions, the owners of Unity Trust Bank, to remove the Coop Bank from any further influence in Unity. We aim to achieve that later this year. In recent years, the General Secretary has explained that we have had cause to investigate branch finances. As a result of that we now have robust and transparent branch financial and audit procedures in place. If branches had not banked with Unity it would have been far harder to resolve the problems that were uncovered and to resolve them quickly and fairly. Please support the credit union but for the proper management of GMB members' money held in branches we would ask you to use Unity Trust, the trade union bank. Colleagues, that is the qualification, and with that simple qualification I urge you to support the motion and I urge you to support the credit union. If we get all unions on board, perhaps we will not have to explain the name because perhaps then we can call it the GMB Credit Union rather than naming it after Will Thorne. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Does North West & Irish accept the qualification? Yes? Thank you very much. With that, colleagues, can I put Composite 16, Motions 172 and 173 to the vote? All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Composition Motion 16 was CARRIED.

Motion 172 was CARRIED

Motion 173 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I have an announcement. E. Hughes in the London Region is the winner of the teddy bear. They made £60-something on it. The bear's name is Stanley. Good job it wasn't Sid or Dave. Will you please see the London Region and ask them for the teddy bear. Thank you.

SOCIAL POLICY: YOUNG PEOPLE

THE PRESIDENT: The next item is Item 10, Social Policy: Young People. Composite 20 to be moved by Southern Region, seconded by Wales & South West Region, and priority in the debate to Birmingham.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, REAL APPRENTICESHIPS AND THE IMPACT ON THE UK ECONOMY

COMPOSITE MOTION 20

C20. Covering Motions:

218. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT (*Birmingham & West Midlands Region*)

223. APPRENTICESHIPS (*Southern Region*)

224. REAL APPRENTICESHIPS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE UK ECONOMY (*Wales & South West Region*)

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, REAL APPRENTICESHIPS AND THE IMPACT ON THE UK ECONOMY

This Conference has major concerns that youth unemployment under the Con-Dem Government is still too high. With close to one million young people out of work, GMB Union must support policies to deal with this problem. We need to campaign to reverse this deplorable statistic before the position becomes irreversible.

This Conference is aware of the effects of the loss of skills within the United Kingdom and the lack of real apprenticeships within the UK job sectors. We must skill our young people to enjoy a better future. The best way to achieve this is through proper apprenticeships where young people can learn trades to last them a lifetime.

We call upon the CEC to lobby Parliament and to promote and encourage employers to invest and introduce real apprenticeships within their Organisations.

Southern Region to Move

Wales & South West Region to Second

Birmingham & West Midlands Region Priority in debate

(*Carried*)

BRO. D. LEAK (Southern): Worthy President, fellow colleagues, I am not the first person to come onto this rostrum on these issues. The problem with education in this country is NVQs. We all know what it stands for, *Not Very Qualified*. It is not a comprehensive system. We must get back to the old technical college style of teaching. If we are going to have apprenticeships, they must be craft apprenticeships and not apprenticeships stacking shelves in superstores. We have tradesmen that are grossly lacking skills, such as those in engineering, including construction and shipbuilding. If we are not careful we will lose all the practical skills which once – I repeat this again, once – made this country great. If we are not careful we will lose it all and there will be no one to maintain the marvellous heritage. Speaking as a young person there are certain apprenticeships with skilled people but there are thousands of young people in this country that are practical. They are not necessarily academically minded but are being neglected unlawfully and who are either on benefits or in low paid menial jobs. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Secunder.

SIS. J. SMITH (GMB Wales and South West): President, Congress, apprenticeships are thriving and already making a huge impact on the productivity of businesses around the country, improving business efficiency, boosting the UK economy, and supporting young people's employment prospects. No longer the presence of only skilled manual trades, apprenticeships cover more than 280 industrial occupations and 1,500 job roles from advertising to youth work, environmental engineering, and nuclear decommissioning. Increasingly apprenticeships are becoming available which will take apprenticeships to degree level qualification.

Congress, we need to increase real apprenticeships in the UK. This is imperative to upskilling our young people, expanding industries, and ensuring UK economy and productivity can be in comparison with our European counterparts. At the moment the likes of Germany and Switzerland are leading Europe and will continue to obtain the skilled young people their country needs to grow. Colleagues, let's get the UK back to a leading country of economic growth and leader of high-quality products which are currently being forgotten as past history. Congress, please support. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Birmingham Region.

BRO. A. STEVENSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): President, Congress, if you picture 1944, a generation of young men and women were at war. Many were lost. Fast forward to 2014, a generation of young people are again being lost, no skills, no chances, no hope, being written off by a government that does not care and has no foresight. Britain was a country of great engineers: think Brunel, Stephenson, and Watt. Now we have a massive skills gap, a generation of youth disaffected with no other aspiration than to claim benefits. Industries are moving out of Britain because they cannot get the skills of the workforce. As a union it is our duty to address this. We need welders. We need CNC machinists. We need sprayers. We need assemblers. We need skilled, motivated young people. If we do not get them, we risk our union dying. What they need is training. They need proper apprenticeships. They need encouraging and mentoring on what will be required of them in their chosen field, and they need to be empowered and want to work. We do not need a failed drugs test, a late interview, or a negative attitude. They need a chance to learn and show what potential they have and not to be knocked back and forgotten and ignored by a government that does not care. Support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Does anyone wish to take part in the debate? No? Thank you. Can I now put composite 20 to the vote? All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Composite Motion 20 was CARRIED.

SOCIAL POLICY: EDUCATION & TRAINING

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to Social Policy: Education & Training and I call 220, Southern Region; 221, Wales & South West; 222, Wales & South West, and 225, Midland Region.

TUITION FEES MOTION 220

220. TUITION FEES

This conference believes that the current tuition fees are detrimental to those from poorer backgrounds. It is clear, that the new ceiling of £9,000 is preventing those less well off students, from attending university. It is therefore not availing everyone, of the equal opportunity to develop their potential and talents. This is detrimental to the country and the economy as a whole.

As statistics show, the majority of those attending university, make more money throughout their working life, than those that do not go to university. The TUC is to campaign to abolish all these fees and replace them with a tax, to be paid by everyone who has attended university.

The tax would be paid by adding a U to the end of all National Insurance Numbers to all those who have attended university. An additional 2% is to be paid on all earnings above £15,000. This is a much fairer way of paying for a university education and would include the vast majority of people who have already had a free university education.

The conference calls on for the Labour Party to make this a clear manifesto commitment.

X98 LFEPa BRANCH
Southern Region

(Referred)

BRO. F. DALY (Southern): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) As it is getting late, I will be brief. Many students are now leaving university with debts in excess of £40,000 except, of course, the

rich. This is deterring many from going to university and leaving us with inequality in our education system. The one thing this country has is talent and talent in abundance. The upfront tuition fees are preventing much of that talent realising its full potential. The proposal is to abolish the upfront fees with a fairer, less complicated system.

I attended a fringe meeting yesterday with Jon Cruddas MP, who was working on Labour Party policy. This reaffirmed that no concrete proposal has yet been determined by the Labour Party but the view is money has to come from somewhere. The proposal is based on the fact that university graduates earn more through their working life directly because of their university education. By adding a “U” to the end of the National Insurance numbers of anybody who has been to university and add 2% to all earnings over £15,000, this is a much more cost effective way of paying for university funding. On a wage of £25,000 it would collect £200 per year, that would take 135 years to pay back the current fees, therefore the proposal is to retrospectively apply it to all those who previously attended university. This would include the likes of Tony Blair, David Cameron, George Osborne, Nick Clegg, Ed Miliband, and Boris Johnson, to name but a few. If education cannot be free to all now, then those who have previously had education should pay for those in years to come. I ask Congress, please, to support this motion and to make a clear Labour Party manifesto commitment in the future. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well done. Secunder.

BRO. A. ACHI (Southern): Good afternoon, Congress, President. I have a dream that one day for our children the right to higher education will not be a choice motivated by ambition or dictated by money. We hold these truths to be self-evident that all children are created equal. I have a dream that one day in this country the sons and daughters of hard working people and the sons and daughters of big bankers will be able to sit together in Cambridge and Oxford Universities. I have a dream that my two little girls will never have to be told that they cannot go to university because their father cannot afford the tuition fees. I have a dream that students whose last names are Turner, Maloney, Kenny, Brimble, Osborne, Cameron, Adigwe, Achi, will be climbing the stairs side by side to attend a lesson. I have a dream that our children will never, never, never be forced by university to quit because parents will miss one instalment. Congress, President, I have a dream that today we are standing together for our children’s right to higher education. I second this motion. *(Applause/Cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: I have a dream you got the red light! Well done.

BRO. A. ACHI (Southern): I have a dream!

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Well done.

**BENEFIT TO YOUNG CHILDREN IN WALES BROUGHT ABOUT BY INVESTMENT IN EARLY LEARNING VIA FLYING START
MOTION 221**

221. BENEFIT TO YOUNG CHILDREN IN WALES BROUGHT ABOUT BY INVESTMENT IN EARLY LEARNING VIA FLYING START

This Conference calls upon the next National Labour Government to learn the lessons from the Labour Government in Wales and invest in early learning as research shows that this investment provides a long term benefit to children, families and the communities in which they live.

TRANSCO GAS BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. HUNT (Wales & South West): How do you follow that! President, Congress, the Flying Start project helps children get the best start in life, offering a broad range of services under one roof. They improve children's outcomes in preparation for school and in the long term.

The Flying Start Wales staff are there from the first years of a child's life. They make sure the children have the opportunity to learn, develop, and play. By maximising children's early learning opportunities, Flying Start help improve their ability to learn in their readiness for school. They also identify and respond to any additional needs a child may have.

Flying Start was introduced in 2007 with funding allocated by the Welsh Assembly in 2010. The Welsh Government expanded the scheme from 2012 onwards with the aim of doubling the number of children from 18 to 36,000 by 2016. In 2012, over 23,000 children in Wales benefited from Flying Start services. This reflects the total number of children who have had contact with a Flying Start health visitor during the year.

Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation and delivery of Flying Start lies with the Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty, a loyal GMB member, Vaughan Gething, Assembly Member.

The Flying Start scheme consists of four care elements, free quality part-time childcare for all eligible two to three year olds, two-and-a-half hours a day, five days a week. They also include 15 sessions of childcare provision for families during school holidays, and enhanced health visits. Flying Start health visitors are allocated 110 children in Flying Start areas, a significantly reduced caseload compared with generic services; parenting support programmes in reference to local needs; early language development and play skills. Eligible children have access to language and playgroups where specialised support can be offered.

Congress, we call upon the next Labour government to learn the lessons from the Welsh government and invest in early learning. This investment provides a long-term benefit to children, families, and the communities in which they live. Congress, please support this motion. Support our children. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder.

SIS. J. SMITH (Wales & South West): President, Congress, Flying Start is a key Welsh government project to help tackle poverty. This is targeted support in our most deprived communities to help families with young children who need extra support. It operates in every county in Wales. Even in the toughest financial times in the face of Tory cuts, Welsh Labour has invested an extra £279m in Flying Start. This is in direct contrast as hundreds of SureStart centres were closed in England by Cameron and his puppet Gove. Our values are driving our priorities. Tory values are driving Tory priorities to take help away from those with the greatest need. More than 23,000 children already get help from Flying Start. Welsh Labour is well on track to meet its manifesto commitment to help 36,000 children by 2016.

On a personal note, my granddaughter, Ellie, and my grandson, Sam, go to a Flying Start school. Ellie is 9 and has a reading age of a 13-year old and has fantastic skills on the computer. Sam is 6, loves to write stories and he has a great imagination. The only complaint I have is that he favours the round ball and not a rugby ball. He might grow out of that!

Flying Start is for all the family with help to young and older parents who find it hard to give their children a start in life. Vaughan Gething, a GMB sponsored Assembly Member, and Deputy Minister, is

on target to give all eligible parents free childcare for children under the age of 4 and an enhanced health visitor service. Please support. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well done. Motion 222, Wales & South West Region.

RISE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN THE UK MOTION 222

222. RISE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN THE UK

This Conference notes with concern the rise in domestic violence and crimes against women in the UK.

We call upon the GMB/The Labour Party to campaign for “relationships” to become part of the National Curriculum in schools.

We believe that young men and women would benefit from this education and in return we believe that our society would become much fairer and more equitable.

PONTYPRIDD GENERAL BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

SIS. J. SMITH (GMB Wales and South West): Domestic violence and crimes against women in the UK is rapidly increasing and it is clear that changing the culture and stamping out of domestic violence is an absolute priority moving forward. A survey of 2,000 13 to 19-year olds was undertaken recently and the results were astonishing and recognised that our young people need re-educating and understanding what is accepted and what is not within relationships.

One in five teenage girls have been hit by a boyfriend. 43% think it is acceptable for a boyfriend to get aggressive. Over 40% of girls said they would consider giving a boy a second chance if he had hit them. 61% have been forced to have sex by a boyfriend. Congress, 6% were raped. The worrying situation has also uncovered that the 31% of girls hit regularly by their boyfriends have seen their parents hit each other. 20% have been hit by their parents. This is a clear link between girls experiencing domestic abuse in the home and getting abused by boyfriends.

Congress, one in four boys thought that hitting a woman was okay if she had slept with someone else. One in eight thought it was okay to hit a nagging or disrespectful woman. There was a huge confusion amongst young people about the meaning of rape, violence, and consent.

These are alarming findings and it is imperative we put in place corrective action and education to reverse young people’s perspective. If we do not act now this ever growing domestic violence will become an epidemic and spread throughout our communities. When we see a wrong and say nothing from embarrassment, uncertainty, or indifference, our silence speaks for itself. We are telling abusers that their actions are acceptable and they can bully. We are also telling young people that this is acceptable.

Congress, this must stop. We must change the views of our young community within the UK. Boys are affected by gender stereotypes and may feel under pressure to behave in an overly masculine or macho way towards girls and women. Gender equality education could help to address the media portrayal and perceived need to display masculinity. Schools have a vital role to play together with parents in helping young people develop a healthy relationship, manage their emotions and change behaviour in some men towards women and girls. Congress, please let’s campaign to ensure that the Labour Party stand by us for relationships to become part of national curriculum in school. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jenny. Secunder.

BRO. I. BOUNDS (GMB Wales and South West): President, Congress, we all understand the principles of this motion. We are concerned at the rise in domestic violence and crimes against women in the UK. However, there is also a rise in violence and crimes within same sex relationships. Jenny has just spoken about the alarming figures for young people who have had an experience of domestic violence between their parents and household peers, accepting this is right and adopting similar characteristics and attitudes. Young people who identify as lesbian gay or bisexual are experiencing abuse at similar rates as those in heterosexual relationships. The Voices Unheard project in Scotland sought to find out LGBT young people's understanding, knowledge, and experience of domestic abuse in their families and relationships. 52% of respondents said they had experienced some form of abusive behaviour from a partner or an ex-partner. However, only 37% of those who had been abused recognised that behaviour as abuse. LGBT young people may also be at greater risk if they may feel they have to keep their relationships hidden. They can be wary of seeking support because they feel a lack of understanding or support from family friends or they may fear the threat of being outed by their partner. There needs to be a commitment to develop a wholesale approach which should involve the whole community. A curriculum must be implemented and discussion about sensitive issues needs careful planning and preparation. Congress, let's get education in relationships onto schools' curriculum and decrease the ever growing domestic violence and crimes against all. Congress, I second. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ian. 225, Midland Region.

SUPPORT FOR APPRENTICES MOTION 225

225. SUPPORT FOR APPRENTICES

This Conference calls on the GMB to actively support apprentices in the workplace by:

- only supporting high quality apprenticeship programmes, programmes that offer progression, realistic job opportunities, a progressive wage, built in Union support, and are accessible to all
- opposing apprenticeships that exploit young workers by paying less than the legal minimum wage
- ensuring that apprentices are not used to replace or undermine existing staff
- increase Union membership among young workers by recruiting apprentices into the GMB and ensuring that all future GMB induction courses include information on supporting apprentices and young workers

LEICESTERSHIRE 2000 BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. L. GUBB (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I ask you to refer to your agenda for this motion as there are four bullet points in it. I would like to start with bullet points one and two, which state: "This Conference calls on the GMB to actively support apprentices in the workplace by: only supporting high quality apprenticeship programmes, programmes that offer progression, realistic job opportunities, a progressive wage, built in Union support, and are accessible to all."

The second bullet point states: “opposing apprenticeships that exploit young workers by paying less than the legal minimum wage”, which is £2.68 for a 16-18 year old, and a 19 year old in their first year of apprenticeship.

We have recently started to have apprenticeships in my workplace and I asked a young member, who has just recently signed on, what he was doing in his apprenticeship, what his thoughts were about it. It turns out that this is his second round on this particular merry-go-round. His first apprenticeship lasted for two years. His workplace was not a bus route so needed a car to get there. On the wages he was to receive for said apprenticeship who could he turn to, Mr. Cameron, for a loan? No, of course not. So who steps in but the bank of mum and dad. Not all young people have an account at that particular bank as their parents are usually struggling to keep themselves afloat. At the end of his training he was offered a job, not a full-time job that he had been led to believe would happen after this apprenticeship but a job totalling 15 hours a week. He was left with no option but to seek other work.

The third bullet point states: “ensuring that apprentices are not used to replace or undermine existing staff.” I found in my workplace some people can seem a little bit jealous of the younger generation; not me, I am quite all there with them. They get a bit jealous thinking that they are getting better training than what they received on the job when they started in that particular employment.

The last bullet point states: “increase Union membership among young workers by recruiting apprentices into the GMB and ensuring that all future GMB induction courses include information on supporting apprentices and young workers.” I went to a fringe meeting at lunchtime about this and I must say on paper it looks as though we have it in hand but we need to make sure it is out there and for reps to know exactly what is happening so we can advise young people. We do not want the apprenticeships to turn out like the YTS scheme of years ago so it is imperative that we get this right. These young people are not just the future of the Union but the future of the country as a whole. Who knows, you could have a future leader of the Labour Party, or the next Prime Minister; come on, girls, let’s have you, let’s have you up and out and get on with it. It is important that the existing workplace reps get the right information to help young members. These apprenticeships are already here in all types of workplaces. I work in a school. I want to make sure that these young people have all the help they need. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Cheers, Laine. Well done. Seconder.

SIS. N. OKURE (Midland & East Coast): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, there has never been a better time to talk about how we train young people for the jobs of the future. It is more important than ever we make sure our educational system gives young people the skills and knowledge they need to get jobs and gives employers the skilled workforce they need in these jobs. So today I would like to talk about one of the most important ways we can do that, one of the most formal ways we can link the world of education and the world of work, world-class apprenticeships. Our goal should be to make them the norm for school leavers alongside university, with each option just as valuable and just as valued, each option helping young people make the best possible start in life and reach their full potential. That is what apprenticeships should do. University is important but not for everyone and an apprenticeship can break open doors to the professions for more people than ever before ensuring that not one person is let down or left behind. That is why I have come here today, that is what we are all working to achieve, and that is what our economy and our society, and our country needs. It is a truth universally acknowledged that no one can please all the people all the time but at first sight apprenticeships seems to be bucking this trend. There are more people on apprenticeships in this country working for more employers in more sectors than ever before. Top apprenticeships are now as competitive as undergraduate places in top universities and a recent survey found that the majority of young people would like to do an apprenticeship. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Natalie, well done. Congress, does anyone wish to come in on the debate? Hello, Pam.

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I was listening to Motion 220 and I would like to oppose it. I suddenly realised he is talking about me. I went to University College London in 1968 and I know I was lucky, I got a grant; I got tuition fees paid. That is how it was at the time. Now you are saying because of that I am going to be penalised by paying taxes? I am an old-age pensioner. I already pay tax on my very meagre pension but the wording of the actual motion would suggest that I would have to pay, on top of what I already pay, taxes to pay for the fact that I was a lucky person in 1968. There will be other people older than me that again will be in the same situation so for that reason I would like to oppose Motion 220. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

SIS. K. ABEL (London): I am a first time delegate and first time speaker. (*Applause*) I also wanted to speak against Motion 220 on tuition fees and I think I need to ask also for it to be taken separately as a motion. I think as attractive as it might sound this motion is essentially calling for us to ask for a graduate tax. I think there are a couple of problems with that. Different types of jobs earn different money. You might need a degree for it but a social worker earns a different amount of money to a doctor. I do not think it is necessarily fair to assume that all graduates earn more money. Also, unfortunately, we have an equal pay gap in Britain so women earn only 85% on average as men. If you ask women graduates to pay tax because they went to university, you are just compounding that problem and making it last longer. As attractive as it may seem, if graduates earn more, then maybe we should have progressive taxation instead. Finally, I want to end on a point that education is good for society as a whole. I want people who can build bridges, treat my children, teach them, and have social workers. I think having education for education's sake is good for society and through taxation we should all pay for it. Please oppose this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Kerry, 220, we are asking for reference on that one, anyway, but I have to take it separately.

SIS. K. ABEL (London): Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Come on, Matt.

BRO. M. SAYWELL (London): President, Congress, I am opposing Motion 220. The response to tuition fees is not to impose more taxes retrospectively or in the future. The response to tuition fees is to tax the rich, bring those tax-dodging scum to justice, make them pay their taxes, and tax the bankers who have crippled our society, not those of us seeking to improve our education. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Does the mover of 220 wish to reply on the points made? Go on, then.

BRO. F. DALY (Southern) exercising a right of reply, said: I would like to reply to say that as much as we would like to get it from the bankers, we are not going to. I think the upfront fee is unfair. It would be a National Insurance tax, not on your actual pay tax. The reason for that is once you get to 65, or get a pension, you do not pay tax on it. (*Contradictory noises from the floor*) To be honest, we are not going to get it free again. That is what the Labour Party are at. That is it. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I call Lorraine Parker on Motion 220.

SIS. L. PARKER (CEC, Public Services): President, Congress, the CEC is asking you to refer Motion 220 on tuition fees. Motion 220 suggests a new way of funding higher education replacing tuition fees with a graduate tax. This proposal is worthy of exploration before committing to GMB policy. GMB has made it very clear that a massive hike in tuition fees under the Tories and LibDems is outrageous and elitist. It is certain to deter people from working class backgrounds going to university by threatening them with a lifetime of student debt. This motion is absolutely right to make this point but our preferred alternative to tuition fees needs to be carefully thought through. GMB has policy from previous congresses to return to a grants-based system funding higher education. This motion is suggesting a different approach and one which would still place a significant financial burden on graduates, not all of whom are actually in well paid jobs. We need to think carefully about this important issue. The CEC is therefore asking for Motion 220 to be referred to enable further consideration to take place. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lorraine. Does Southern Region accept the referral? You do. Okay, does Congress accept the referral? Is that a massive yes? Listen, it is getting ruddy late so stop it! Okay, can we now move to 221, 222, 225, which we are supporting. All those in favour, please show. Thank you. I promise the young delegates who came up that we will take your views into consideration when the CEC looks at this referral. Okay? Yes, Mary. Thank you.

Motion 220 was REFERRED.

Motion 221 was CARRIED.

Motion 222 was CARRIED.

Motion 225 was CARRIED.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT AND ADDRESS

THE PRESIDENT: Item 12, which is what you have all been waiting for. I now call on Paul Kenny, our General Secretary and Treasurer, to move the General Secretary's Report and to address Congress. Paul Kenny.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY ADDRESSED CONGRESS

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, President. President, and colleagues, if I may, I will just conclude a little bit of business from last year. During the wind-up last year I made the point that one of the great honours of being a General Secretary is that you get to go round and meet delegates and visitors about 11 o'clock at night, after everyone has had a few pints, and they want to tell you the most interesting stories and as you are on duty you listen. That's the name of the game. What you do pick up is lots of really good ideas and last year I bumped into the Wales and South West Region reception about 11 o'clock, I just undid my tie and I was getting ready to cut loose, and have a Babycham, and I bumped into a gentleman called Brian Newman. Brian is sitting there. Brian said to me, and you always know it is coming when someone comes up to you about 11 o'clock and says, "How are you?" You say, "Yes." He says, "Do you mind if I ask you a question?" You know, "Okay, fine." What Brian said, basically, was, "Paul, I am a long-serving member. I've been a member of the Union for nearly 40 years now. Why can't long-serving members have a badge so we can show that we are proud of being long-serving members of the Union?" When I did the wind-up speech last year I said, "That's a really good idea, Brian, and I'm going to do it. We'll take it back and we'll design it." I brought Brian up today because we are going to give him the first of those long-service badges. *(Presentation amid applause)* Thank you. Well done. I am really glad I thought of it! Sorry, mate.

Congress, President, Paul Kenny moving the General Secretary's Report, which covers the work of the Union and the departments of the Union during the last year, including, for new delegates, the outcome of a lot of the resolutions that you passed last year and the ones that were referred. They don't go into a bin, they actually do go through a process and we use them. You can see there what happens.

Congress, I have actually got the most wonderful and fantastic honour of speaking to this Congress in the role of General Secretary for this the 10th time. My first speech as General Secretary was in Newcastle and what a fantastic conference it was. (*Applause*) Newcastle was where we actually turned the Union around. We pledged to return our Union to the values from which it was born and in the years between Newcastle and here in Nottingham we have much to be proud of. Our campaigns have actually changed the outcomes in areas like residential care, private equity, bankers' bonuses, living wage, and many, many more from tied pubs to the great private landlord rip-off; and much, much more I can promise you, is planned during the next 12 months in the run-up to the election.

At that Congress, that Newcastle Congress, I made it clear that our re-born union would do what it was intended to do, what it was born to do, which was intended always to campaign and to fight bad employers, and bad politicians, and those who denied our members recognition and bargaining rights. We said we would start with the As, for those of you who were there, it has to start somewhere, we will start with the As, and some of the As were Bs, believe me.

We said we would start with the As and would move through the alphabet, and we chose two particular targets at that Congress, Asda and the AA. In fact, historically for the first time in the Union's history our Congress adjourned, we all got on the buses, and we went down to the AA Headquarters outside Newcastle and we picketed the buggers. We did it because they had decided to derecognise our Union inside the AA. But the GMB at that Newcastle Congress got its soul back, in my opinion, and we took back our role of not running away, that people would learn that the GMB sticks no matter what and how long it takes.

In Asda, we organised, tough, but we organised and led to a national collective bargaining agreement in distribution which we signed two years ago. That was a first for Asda Wal-Mart anywhere in the world. Now we have signed an agreement with Asda to deliver a full recognition and collective bargaining agreement for stores by the time the next Congress meets. (*Applause*) This agreement will form the largest private sector agreement signed in 50 years. When it is completed it will cover 200,000 workers. It has been a long hard slog. It has been a relationship education for Wal-Mart and a huge achievement for the officers, for the stewards, for the activists, and members, who have built and stuck with our Union through all of the years when we said we would take back our collective bargaining rights in Asda stores, and we are there.

The next few months will be spent engaged with our stewards, our members, and our officers, actually building and writing out what that agreement means in reality, and it has to mean the basics for us of dealing with pay, with pensions, with health and safety, with shop stewards' rights and, most of all, ensuring that every Asda worker, wherever they are, gets the respect, the proper respect, that they are due and which they can only actually get through a collective bargaining agreement organised by their trade union, the GMB. So, well done to you all: a fantastic achievement. (*Applause*)

They tell us, of course, that unions are dead. They do. They tell us that unions are dead; of course, people don't want to join unions. Do you know this Union has grown every single year since we met in Newcastle? You must put something in the water! Every single year this Union has grown, not by crying about it but by building on the plan that we made, GMB@Work. We had to be relevant, we had to

rebuild. The very nature of people in this hall, look at the number of new delegates this year, last year, this is all the new lifeblood coming through to rejuvenate the organisation.

Along with Asda we had the AA, a slightly different story with them. An organisation which not only derecognised the GMB in collaboration, I have to say, with a quisling staff group who conspired with the employer to smash our organisation and set up the employer to remove the protection the GMB had spent years building for the employees. They took away our facilities, they took away our check offs, they refused to meet us, and our membership fell, but the GMB Southern Region did not buckle and the GMB nationally did not buckle. We set about rebuilding and fighting.

Rather than me telling you the story, I want to break another tradition, I like doing that in this job, and I want to introduce Robert Devine, who is better equipped than me to update you on progress at the Asda – sorry, AA. He might as well do it for Asda as well while you are here. Robert, where are you? Come and speak to Congress. *(Applause)*

BRO. R. DEVINE (Southern Region Branch Secretary of GMB AA): First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* Also, by the way, my wife works in Asda so I have been on that journey too. Sincerely, thank you very much, Paul, for letting me do this speech today. I feel very privileged to do so.

Our motion is referred to the Commercial Services Conference but I feel it is important for the whole of Congress to know about GMB Union's progress in such a high profile brand name as the AA. Congress, there has not been a delegate from the AA since 2004. I am proud to fill this role and it won't be another 10 years before there is another delegate. *(Applause)*

Since then our service has been raped, plundered, decimated by private equity, and I think we all know about that, whilst disappointedly being supported by an ex-officer of the GMB, who led and continues to lead a scab union beckoning to every whim of the AA. In 2004, the private equity owners funded and set up a scab union and hoodwinked the vast majority of staff to leave the GMB. Within months almost 4,000 people were basically sacked, disabled employees discriminated against, terms and conditions lost and working practices changed beyond recognition. Sadly, the scab union cooperated fully with the private equity owners to the major detriment of AA staff.

As this was happening, the private equity owners were busy plunging the AA further and further into debt whilst they creamed off millions of pounds to swell their offshore bank accounts. The AA was bought for £1.7bn on a debt basis and is currently £4.5bn in debt. Robbed by private equity and the casino capitalist vultures staff are currently going through yet more changes to terms and conditions resulting in working harder with longer hours for less pay. We have just found out that due to the poor attempted float of Saga in our group on the Stock Exchange, they are now going to float the AA. I am pretty sure it is going to be to the detriment of our staff again.

Congress, the GMB Union stood by me and our members and I know they always will. They saw what was happening to us and knew it was wrong while the majority of staff were oblivious to the terrible things the AA were doing. I and my colleagues, with strong and determined support from the GMB, never gave up, and we will never give up in our quest to reinstate the GMB union as the recognised union for the staff at the AA.

I can confirm that as a result of our efforts we now have a flourishing GMB branch with growth in double figures every month and now have more than 800 members across the AA. *(Applause)* We have fought for every member and will continue to fight for every member of staff. We cannot and will not let any company set an agenda to destroy any group of GMB members or the trades union Movement and I ask

for the support of all GMB activists and urge you to protect our great Union that has helped and protected us in the face of adversity over the last 10 years. I am certain it will continue to do so.

I just want to do a little brief. I don't think the officers and the people higher up really get a lot of thanks. I know people appreciate them but I would just like to say a few thank yous. I would like to thank Paul Maloney, Rob Macey, our friend down in Chessington, Bactu Mistri, whose key line is always, "It'll be OK," all support staff in the GMB, Simpson Millar, Asha Wije, and the stewards who have taken on some really big cases in the AA for disability and health and safety, and their success rate is outstanding.

Last, and definitely not least, I have always been union-minded and I have always been in the GMB. I have only been an activist about the last seven years and GMB Branch Secretary two years. It was a big, big learning curve for me but the one man that has seen me through it is Paul Grafton. (*Applause*) I know I spoke to a few of you whilst I have been here the last few days and his name has come up and everybody has a good word to say about him, he is an outstanding bloke, knowledgeable, great tactician, great mentor, and has helped us in our branch. I cannot say enough about the man and what he has done for our branch; we have recognition but we just have not full recognition, but to get us recognition back in the AA, I thank you right from the heart. (*Applause*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I just thought that he could say that much better than I could. Thank you, mate. I know that was a big ask but everybody was keen. I make the pledge that that level of support will not only still be there but it will be increased. Now is never the time to back off. Now is always the time to go forward. So well done, and thank you and all the colleagues at Asda and AA, who have actually rebuilt the organisation from what looked like, when we were in Newcastle and what other people may have done in other generations have shrugged their shoulders and walked away, we stick, and that's what we do. So thank you to everybody for that.

I can't let this Congress go by without at least spending a few minutes talking about the scandal of blacklisting. Last year we had the Blacklist Support Group. Dave Smith spoke to our Congress and I think he shocked quite a lot of people about what had gone on, but the GMB produced a map of where the 2,300 people who were blacklisted by the constructors' employers lived. We got this issue debated in every city and town in the country. Justin Bowden has done an incredible job, and our thanks should go to Justin and the team for pushing this scandal into the public spotlight. (*Applause*) We have always known – in fact, I guess we've always known, but we've probably been too blasé to worry about it – that trade unionists who dared to speak up for workers' rights about pay, about their jobs or about health and safety were targets. We, sort of, knew it, but never, really, until these cases did we have the evidence to prove how employers, the police, the security services and politicians ignored the law and all the rules of a decent society just to stop working people organising for a better life.

We have driven the Information Commissioner to do what it says on his door, to inform people. The ICO have been foot-dragging. They've been dragged to become partners in the battle to expose this scandal and much more is yet to come. The GMB was the first union to file court cases, and they will be interesting, to say the least. But with real breakthroughs possible in state accountability within our grasp for the first time in long-standing campaigns, from the Shrewsbury pickets, to Cammell Laird and to Hillsborough, now is not the time to ease up. Now is the time to put your foot on the gas.

The public used to have great trust in those four old pillars of society: the bank manager, the politician, the media and the legal system. These were the four pillars of our society and they have all been rocked by the scandals, lies and abuses of power. From bankers to media moguls, from politicians to senior police officers, we have seen unfold before us in recent years greedy, boot-filling antics finally laid bare for all to see. We have a right to expect better. The British people have a right to expect better than those

who hold themselves up as custodians of our society. Is it any wonder that so many of our members – in fact, so many people – become disillusioned with politics and politicians? Who gets our vote or our apathy impacts on every single aspect of our lives; what type of education young people get, what healthcare, transport, work, pay, equality, housing, who we go to war with and why, our environment and who gets the benefit of our planet's natural resources? If you still can't be bothered to vote, then you are accepting that you and your family will always lose out.

In the way we promised as a union we would tackle bad employers, a few years ago we drew up a new political battle plan and we have carried this plan out. First, get more GMB members who have real life skills and work experience into government at all levels, real people, not people who have chosen a plastic path from adviser to Westminster. After the last election, the Labour Party in Westminster had its lowest level of representation from people who had actually worked for a living in outside industries since the first time the party got into Parliament. That's how far it had fallen into the hands of those academics and those professional politicians. We want our members, real people, being selected for Westminster seats, and we've been successful.

We've never felt the need, as some others may do, to shout about it from the rooftops, because that is what you agreed and told us to do, so that's what we set about doing. We didn't need to leak to the press what we were up to; we just got on with it. We didn't need to go around telling people how tough we were, because I guess from where I grew up, and probably where a lot of you grew up, if you had to walk around telling people how tough you were, you really weren't.

Helping candidates get selected is one thing, and that's a point that I come back to when I was talking this morning in that earlier debate. Helping them get selected is part of the deal, and helping them win is the next part of that arrangement. Again, without fuss, without the need to preen ourselves, we just got on with it. The vision we had of changing the make-up, knowledge and political desires of the Labour Party in the House of Commons now is within our grasp. Let me just give you a couple of examples.

Peterborough. A woman called Lisa Forbes – a real person – you would recognise her. You would be able to hold a conversation with her. You'd understand what she was saying and, more importantly, she'd understand what you were saying. A mother with no silver spoon in her mouth. Probably, there were times in her life when there wasn't even a plastic one. She is a solid, good person and GMB. If any journalist went up to Lisa – you'd better get ready, Lisa, in case they do this now – and said to her, "How much are you spending a week on your weekly shopping?", she really would be able to tell you.

Recently 150 plus GMB members – they say "Ah, we're not interested in politics" – gave up their time and went to Peterborough and turned up to help Lisa, as they had done in other constituencies. They came from London and from the Midlands. They went to leaflet and canvass in Peterborough. Dennis Skinner turned up. He's a good sort is Dennis. He looked at all of these people piling out of the cars and coaches, and he said, "They say that trade unions are dead. They say that trade unionists are not interested in politics, that the members don't care. I think someone's got it wrong." Actually, he said it a bit more colourfully than that, but I don't want to go into that. The point was that the message was that if we want to change things, we actually have to do things. That's the whole point of what *GMB @ Work* was all about. It meant that we did it ourselves. We didn't pass a resolution and cry because somebody didn't do it. We got off our butts, we put our best people in and we get committed people, who actually come from our ranks, who understand our problems and who won't turn us over at the first whiff of a ministerial brief. (*Applause*)

I want to mention a person as an example of that army of people, and they are all over this hall, who just decided to get off the anger pot and start to going on to the knocker. I want to mention a guy called Dean Gilligan. (*Applause*) I have known Dean for many years when I was a local officer. He's a nice guy. Don't get me wrong. He's a lovely fellow. He looked after the members, went to the pub and lived a

good lifestyle. Work was this and the rest of his life was something else. As many people think, “I’ll do it in the workplace, but there nothing else.” Then he got involved. He looked after his members in the workplace but really it stopped at the depot gates. Then I watched him blossom, first, into a community campaigner for the Health Service, campaigning for the Health Service in his area and supporting other workers including, as you heard earlier, that fantastic and successful dispute in Ealing, where members stood and fought and got the right wages for the right job. Dean was instrumental in encouraging and supporting those workers outside of his own normal workplace. That’s the sort of community activity he did. *(Applause)* Then, you will never believe this, he turns up on my ward standing as a local councillor. Apart from bringing in, literally, coach loads of helpers in order to clear out my beer closet, he worked so hard. It was not for him to moan. He was a doer. It was a tough ward. The Tories had held it and built on it for a number of years in Harrow. Dean did not win the seat, I am very, very sad to say, but he encouraged enough people to get active with Labour and Labour’s vote increased by a thousand votes in that ward. *(Applause)* I can tell you that he gave the sitting Tory councillor the fright of their lives, because Dean was understood on the doorsteps and the doorsteps understood Dean. That’s the power of communicating with real people because you’ve got an empathy; you understand and they believed you. That’s the honesty of understanding the struggle. That’s why part of the exercise is that politicians who say clichéd phrases are failing to connect with people. It’s all right saying, “We hear you”, but the question becomes, “What have you listened to? What have you picked up?”

Look at Islington Council in London. They have had a radical agenda over the last few years, everything from bringing services back under public control to reintroducing free services again for the young and the over-60s. The council, by the way, was the first one which came to me and signed it in my office, voted never to give a contract to a company that blacklisted trade unionists. *(Applause)* Islington Council used to be Liberal run, you know. It was a GMB member, I have to tell you, a man called Gary Doolan, who some of you might have met, who stood against the leader of Islington Council at the time, a Liberal, and beat him. He knocked him out. That was the encouragement for many to realise that, actually, “Don’t talk about it. Let’s get up and organise.” Now that Islington Labour group have been swept back in – swept back in – to power in London. It was a landslide. Do you know why? They are not just talking about a radical manifesto but they are delivering it.

Before I move on, I want to move our gratitude for Labour councils up and down the country that have actually started to sign up to issues like the Living Wage, who are giving proper facilities to working people. But let me also spell out to those who have yet to be converted – let me be absolutely crystal clear to you – if you want our help, then we demand your loyalty. If you want our organisational support, then we demand your loyalty. If you want our cash, then we demand your loyalty. Your loyalty consists not of kneeling down at our feet. What our loyalty consists of is honouring the basic socialist principles that you should have had in your heart when you first stood for office in any Labour Party constituency anywhere in the country, because if you don’t have those principles, you are in the wrong party. *(Applause)*

I want to talk a little bit about UKIP, because I just don’t subscribe to the view that many people in the media and elsewhere do that UKIP just gets its support from racist voters, because it does not. Whilst it might be slightly upmarket and a bit more respectable vehicle than the BNP for such people who cast their votes, or expound their views, I am afraid that there are more fundamental problems about Europe that we have to face up to. Whatever the European vision was on integration, harmony, economic advancement and political stability, what we currently have isn’t it. The free movement of labour and the single market was to be balanced by the Social Charter, where all the people of Europe would live in freedom, and with those in the poorer economies benefiting from the harmonisation of standards across all Member States, with workers protection, TUPE, excessive hours, health and safety, information and consultation rights. There are so many others which we meant to keep the power of labour exploitation in

check. That dream has been chipped away at for years. Right-wing governments and employers, who want to suppress employment rights and establish agreements on pay, have engineered massive change in the direction of the EU vision. Judgments in the European Court like *Viking* and *Laval* were the green light to massive assaults on organised labour across Europe, but especially in the UK. From the Lindsay Oil Refinery to food production, we have seen workers recruited in certain Member States by agencies and exploited. They've been shipped in, literally, as they did at Lindsay. They were shipped in in order to undermine the terms and conditions of existing workers on those contracts.

About exploitation, don't ever blame the exploited. Damn those who exploit them. (*Applause*) That exploitation has been repeated up and down the country over recent years, and that's the part of the discontent that UKIP have been turning into xenophobic rhetoric to win votes. So, please, look beyond the simplistic tags and face the challenge of exploitation. Let's reach out as a union. Let's take a lead and reach out to those migrant workers, not to attack them, but to organise them and to protect them.

I end with a simplistic but heart-felt plea to Labour. If you really want to win in 2015, to get back those millions of votes that have been lost, then speak to people in the language and currency we understand, and do it with some passion. Britain really does need a pay rise, people really do need homes, rents really do need capping, housing benefit, as one of the delegates said, should be renamed "corporate welfare", because that is really what it is, stop landlords off-shoring tax payments and avoiding tax on their profits. We want bricks before landlords' gravel drives. Support and deliver a workplace without fear. Far too many workers still go to workplaces in this country and are fearful about even asking to exercise their basic rights to ask for the minimum wage or a contract of employment or to clear up a health and safety issue. If you want to challenge for a new Labour Government, create a workplace without fear and equip the trade unions to enforce it. Take away our shackles and we will tell you what enforcement is all about. (*Applause*)

Stop the privatisation of our Health Service. Can anybody, please, tell me – take me round the back and give me a belting if I can't understand it – how making profits out of patients makes a better Health Service, because it doesn't work for me. How does paying billions to American consultants to cream off taxpayers' money designed to help patients helps the Health Service, please somebody explain it to me. I'm sure they are all much brighter than I am, so enlighten me why it is good for people to make profits out of people's suffering, pain and misery. So tell me, please, stop the privatisation of our Health Service and reverse the trends. (*Applause*)

If I was a Labour politician I would be going round the country and saying, "It's about time we took control of some of our essential services". I'd start with water – I've got a long list – and the reason why I'd start with water is because you can't have life without it. I have said this before, and I mean it, but I've never understood why this stuff falls out of the sky for free and we end up paying huge bills just to have it coming out of the tap. I don't understand. If ever there was a strong case for public control of any industry, any of our basic survival needs, it is the water industry. I've got a novel idea. It might get bounced around a bit, but there are a load of rail franchises coming up in the next 15 months – I think there are 11 – and do you know what I'd do? I truly would. I'd be bold about this if I was a Labour politician. I'd say, "Let's give a vote to all those people who are paying four grand for a season ticket and can't get a seat on the train. Let's give a vote to the travelling public about whether they want to carry on putting money into the back pockets of the people running it or whether they would have it returned to public ownership? I'll tell you this. I'll bet an awful lot of them would say, "We've had enough of them." Trusting people at times, give people an opportunity, might catch on. Who knows? The Tories might say, "This is a great idea. Let's ask people if we should nationalise the electricity industry? Let's give people a say. You never know your luck."

I think that the reality of where we have gone over the last 30 years – it's take us a while to wake up – but the truth of the matter is that every aspect of the issues that affect our lives, and the NHS is going the same way, are all controlled effectively now by board rooms. They are not controlled by politicians and they are not controlled by local or national democratic decisions. I'm talking about all of those key issues, all of the infrastructure issues. Somebody at some time is going to say "Enough is enough".

If you want to talk about zero hours, I have a simple remedy. Just outlaw them. (*Applause*) It is really simple. Honestly, do you know when they talk about all these people who want zero hours, they don't want a secure employment job, they don't want a proper wage, they don't want to be able to go and buy a house, a car or get something on HP. They don't want any of that. They want the fantastic freedom of being at the complete beck and call of their employer! You just wouldn't dream it up, would you? I have a simple remedy. Just get rid of them.

While you are at it, it's about time that we cleaned up the abuses of employment agencies. It is long overdue, and it is not difficult to do, by the way. They must give to the people in this country what we were promised, a national care service, something that is built on the principles of care, not the dogma of the workhouse. That is what we were promised a few years ago, not the lottery of where and who could pay in order to get a service. The care service in this country, and we have many members in it, is under resourced, it's unloved and, frankly, the people in it, from my experience, and I have had a bit in the last few years, have been some of the most dedicated, decent, wonderful people that I've ever come across in the public service and they are paid a bloody pittance. (*Applause*)

A Labour Party Report is coming out now and it is going to suggest, basically, that one of the options is to reshuffle the chairs on the Titanic. I'm sorry, I don't care what Ed Balls says. You know my view of Ed Balls. He'd give an Aspirin a headache. He keeps saying, "We can't make any spending commitments." Well, if we can't make any spending commitments to give dignity to our people in this country in retirement, then, really, why did you come into politics in the first place?

We do want an education system for all. Frankly, I don't have a problem. We had a system where people were able from whatever background to advance themselves and get through university. You can see now the impact of those tuition fees, so I am not a great supporter of reloading the debt another way. I am just a great supporter of dumping the debt entirely. We want an education for all not some sort of feeder stream with the end ones getting to Eton. We just want a decent education system, and it is the right of every family and child in this country to have a decent education and to come through it not with an £80 grand debt at their back, but with an understanding that if they go forward that they have a commitment in future to remember the country that actually gave them that opportunity.

The Labour Party has to give us in this election to come just a bit of hope. I just want some of them to inspire me with a bit of hope, that we've got a better and secure life to come. Not a cliché, but with passion from the heart. Most of you know that I'm not much of a football supporter because I support Fulham, but you know that. I don't have a lot of knowledge apart from Michael Jackson's statue. In fact, he'd have done better in our backline than the two we had last year, but there's another thing. He was only a statue. We call it "Kissing the badge", and what I would like to see from a lot of those Labour Party MPs is "Kiss the badge. Kiss the badge of who we are." Our job is to stand up for the working people of this country and their families, retired members and the young. That's our job. We say that we want to support the many and not the few. That translated to me means we want to support tenants, not landlords. When we say we want the many and not the few that means the people who use transport, not the corporations that earn money from it. When we say we want the many and not the few, that means the millions of people who rely on our Health Service, not the people who are about to take the money out of the back door. So kiss the badge; be who you are. Don't be ashamed of the fact that they are the Labour

Party. Don't try and find a ground where you will be uncomplicated or you will appeal to some intellectual middle-class understanding of what politics is. Go back to what drove you in the first place to want change in our society. Don't be ashamed of being radical because, actually, in these times being radical is probably just being normal. Rejoice in it and be proud. Most of all make us proud that after the next election you have not disappointed the British people and you won't disappoint those of us who have supported you through thick and thin. Win us an election but, more importantly, win us back our society for the good of all of our people. Thank you. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Paul. Are there any questions on the General Secretary's Report? *(No response)* Does Congress accept the Report?

(The General Secretary's Report was CARRIED)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, as you leave the hall, please give generously to the bucket collection in aid of **Joseph Lillywhite's Journey**, organised by Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region.

You are all invited to celebrate the GMB's 125th anniversary. Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott will be playing at a private function open to GMB credential holders. Congress, there has been a change in location for this event. The new venue is: Black Cherry Lounge, Talbot Street, close to the Crown Plaza and Ramada Hotels. All other details remain the same.

We will also have the pleasure of hearing from a guest who is on our platform, who is Rachel Holmes the author of a biography on Eleanor Marx. Eleanor did more than any other women to transform British politics in the 19th century. She was, clearly, a very special person and we hold very dear the memory of her unique contribution to the founding of our Union. Rachel's book will be on sale at the Bookmarks stand. Congress, Rachel is not going to give her speech tonight. You've got to go to the Black Cherry to hear it.

That concludes Congress until Wednesday at 9.30 pm. You are all going into your sections tomorrow. See you later.

Congress adjourned until Wednesday morning at 9.30 am.