

**GMB**

**CONGRESS 2013**

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**SIS. MARY TURNER MBE**

**(President)**

**(In the Chair)**

.....

Held in:

**Plymouth Pavilions,  
Plymouth**

on:

**Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2013**

**Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013**

**Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

and

**Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

.....

**PROCEEDINGS**

**DAY FOUR**

**(Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013)**

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**FOURTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY, 5<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2013  
MORNING SESSION**

*(Congress re-assembled at 9.30 a.m.)*

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, please come to order. Good morning, colleagues. I hope you have all been listening to these wonderful children greeting us and waking us up this morning. *(Applause)* What a wonderful little group. Congress, please welcome the children from Montpelier Primary in Plymouth, who are here with their teachers, Jessica Rowe and Donna Williams. I would like to thank them for the lively entertainment. *(Standing ovation)* It gives me great pleasure to present Montpelier Primary School with a £2,000 cheque. *(Applause)* It's not every time you get that for playing music, is it? Well done. *(Applause)* Congress, tomorrow this lady is in the finals of the Music Primary Teacher of the Year. *(Applause)*

JESSICA ROWE (A teacher): Thank you very much, everybody. It makes a huge difference to the music making we can do and we are glad if we put a smile on your face this morning. It has been a pleasure to play for you. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Announcements. If anyone has photos they would like included in the end-of-Congress slideshow, the funnier the better, then please see Charlotte in the Press Office.

Congress, we will try to take the motions carried over from Tuesday later this afternoon.

Harry, you've got one of Paul Kenny from last night so make sure it is on that slide!

Can I call Helen Johnson to move Standing Orders Committee Report No.6? Helen.

**STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO.6**

*(Adopted)*

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee) moved SOC Report No.6. She said: President, Congress, on the subject of bucket collections, the SOC has been informed that the amount collected yesterday in the bucket collection organised by London Region, *The National Ugly Mug Scheme*, was £603.10. *(Applause)*

Congress, the SOC asks that all delegates today please keep to your allotted time slots. There were a number of speakers yesterday who did not respect the red light. There are still a large number of motions to be debated and the SOC wants to avoid having to recommend reducing speaking times as this would be unfair to those delegates who have yet to speak. President, Congress, I move SOC Report No.6. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Helen. Any questions? No? SOC report carried? *(Agreed)* Thank you.

*SOC Report No.6 was ADOPTED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. As you heard about the collection, *Ugly Mugs*, well, I knew London had a few! *(Laughter)* Anyway, colleagues, just to let London Region know, and Congress, the General Secretary has agreed with me that we will double that. *(Applause)* Now I'll ask him! *(Laughter)*

Before we start today's scheduled business, could I please call Brian Strutton, National Secretary, to update Congress on the GMB Living Wage. We will have a PowerPoint with local authorities to be scrolled on the screen while Brian speaks. Thank you, Brian. I cut him off in his prime yesterday.

## **BRIAN STRUTTON, NATIONAL SECRETARY, UPDATED CONGRESS ON THE GMB LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN**

BRO. B. STRUTTON (National Secretary): Colleagues, the national minimum wage is £6.19 an hour and will rise to £6.30 from 1<sup>st</sup> October. It was a great Labour achievement to bring that in. It was a major step towards alleviating poverty and despite all those naysayers who claimed that it would cost millions of jobs, it did not, and it has been a great success, but the minimum wage only does what it says on the tin, it is a minimum, a bare minimum. GMB has long argued that the national minimum wage is too low and so the concept of the living wage was born based not on a minimum standard of living, and certainly not a luxurious lifestyle, but a reasonable standard of living. Designed by economists the living wage is £7.45 an hour and £8.55 in London, over a pound an hour more than the minimum wage. It is set so as to be a reflection of the true cost of living, which at the lowest levels of pay is more than at higher rates of pay. That is because the things that form the highest proportion of costs, like water bills and gas bills, electricity bills, petrol, and food, are the things that have seen the greatest level of inflation. It is not the headline inflation number that matters, it is the real cost of living that is actually hurting people.

That leads to two things: firstly, what has become known as in-work poverty; secondly, the recognition of this through topping up low pay through the benefits system. It is a crazy and shameful fact that the majority of welfare benefits are paid to people in work. How ridiculous is that, how demeaning to those workers, how economically inefficient. What it means is that employers are getting away with cheapskate pay levels topped up by the state through in-work benefits. That is the taxpayer subsidising low wage employers. We see that in the care sector, in cleaning jobs, in catering and hospitality, in schools, in retail, so often sharing this common feature that they are jobs done by women, more often than not part-time.

So, GMB is absolutely clear, everyone should be paid at least the living wage, everywhere, and nowhere is the madness and shame of low wages topped up by benefits more stupid than in the public sector. It is a scandal that 280,000 local government workers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, are paid less than the living wage. It is a scandal. That is where we started the GMB national campaign for a living wage in January of this year, aimed at persuading every council to become a living wage employer, starting with their own staff, extending to agency and contract workers and suppliers, building them out to the whole local business community, bringing in the private sector as well. That is our strategy, reaching out to everyone, everywhere.

When we kicked our campaign off in January some councils had already started to introduce the living wage. Since then, GMB has engaged in negotiations with 170 councils in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and in Scotland all 32 local authorities are now living wage employers paying their staff at least the living wage; great credit to our GMB Scotland colleagues. They do deserve that. (*Applause*) Joyce Cooper, from our Fife Branch told me the other day that thanks to the living wage some 2,000 staff in Fife Council alone had had a pay rise of up to 18%, that is absolutely brilliant, that is why we believe in it. Well done, Scotland. But how have we been getting on in the rest of the UK? Well, let's have a look.

Here is the roll of honour. Out of 400 councils, there are now 82 paying or committed to pay their staff the living wage. That is real progress. That is tens of thousands of council workers getting paid more fairly and being less reliant on benefits, having dignity and respect for the work that they do. We have achieved this progress mainly in Labour councils, as you would expect, and I am pleased to

say this is one policy area in which Labour and the GMB stand shoulder to shoulder. Ed Miliband and Rachel Reeves have given strong personal support for our living wage campaign and I hope it will feature as a key policy commitment in Labour's next manifesto. That will give it a massive extra boost, which we do need not just to crack open all the other councils but to take it all the way out into every job in every sector in every part of the UK.

I recently spoke about this at the Labour Local Government Day in Chesterfield. It was so encouraging to hear council after council saying that now that they have introduced the living wage for their own staff, they were preparing for the next stage, and many already have plans for how they would engage their local private sector businesses in their areas with the firm intention of naming and shaming those businesses who would not sign up to a living wage commitment. That is the way to do it.

No employer should be allowed any more to get away with poverty pay subsidised by the state. Nobody should be paid less than the living wage. No more should the whole economy be propped up by an exploited class for the part-time low-paid jobs; our care worker members, our schools members, our retail members, our security members, and everyone else deserves at least the living wage. If it means taking action to get it, well, that is what we do because poverty pay must end.

Congress, that is our challenge to ourselves. It will be one hell of a battle but, as Paul Kenny said to you yesterday, it's one we are very proud to take on. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brian. Congress, I now move to today's business. I will be calling motion 19, to be moved by Yorkshire, and 20, to be moved by Yorkshire. I will then call Martin Smith to speak on motion 20 from the CEC. Thank you.

**UNION ORGANISATION: RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISATION  
SERVICING EXISTING MEMBERS  
MOTION 19**

**19. SERVICING EXISTING MEMBERS**

This Congress instructs the GMB to apply equal effort to persuading members to become active and activists to become stewards, safety reps and union learner reps, as it does to recruiting new members.

All of the above posts are needed to service the needs of existing members and motivated activists.

CHESTERFIELD NO. 1 BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. C. GAVIN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, good morning, everybody. In light of this motion I undertook a survey of existing members in my old workplace. I asked my old colleagues there what correspondence or interaction they had received since I left from my old workplace, from the GMB. The answer was shocking but deep down I knew what it would be. They had received the regional magazine, the schools bulletin, information about a pay deal, and one meeting that was actually organised by our local regional organising team last month. "Anything else," I asked. "No," was the answer. I left there in March 2012, over one year on they had only had four separate occasions of some sort of contact, just four in 14 months, no emails, no letters, no invitations to events, no offer of courses. Appalling is a polite word to describe the situation. It was for this very reason that I left Unison around six years ago.

We are fantastic at recruiting new members but after they have joined then what? Unless you become a shop steward, health and safety rep, you may as well be invisible, it would appear. The

GMB cannot afford to leave these members behind. How do we engage? On Sunday I spoke in support of the *CEC Special Report, GMB Branches: A Future that Works*. I spoke about active branches, getting them healthy again. We need to pull out the weeds, water and nourish the roots we have already established to aid them to flourish and grow. We need to show our members that we care about everybody, new and old. We are about building a collective voice. We have voices out there ready and waiting to be heard if only they had the opportunity to do so. These existing members have experience and knowledge that can only make the GMB stronger. If we do not engage these members how will they understand that they too can make change happen; they, too, can influence.

I know out there are GMB members in branches that did not know they could come to Congress, did not know that they could come and have a say about what they want to happen. I also know that there are long-term members out there who once were active, stepped back a little, and have been left to walk away as if they did not matter, that nobody cared about them, nobody asked them, “Why are you not joining in any more?”

I believe that putting as much effort into engaging existing members as we do new needs to be done and it needs to be done swiftly. We need to look at branches where people take on titles and do nothing. Okay, yes, it is voluntary and people do have lives but so do the same people who turn out again and again; if they can give their time, why can't others. We just need to sow again the seeds of inspiration and enthusiasm that only active branches can do. Passion is free and we need to use it. Out there in a branch near you could be the future Labour leader, one that knows the struggle that we all have had, one that could turn this country around and bring back the values of the Party, take it back to its roots. Congress, I ask you to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Cindy. Secunder?

BRO. M. DOLAN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, recruitment is an integral part of any union activist. More focus should be put on retention so that existing members are serviced at a level that encourages involvement and participation in branch activities. This will actually keep branch officials on their toes as a poor official will easily be replaced. A vibrant active branch would not need to recruit as non-members would be clambering to join. In short, retain, develop, and grow. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Martin. The mover of 20?

## **SUPPORT DOMESTIC SERVICE WORKERS MOTION 20**

### **20. SUPPORT DOMESTIC SERVICE WORKERS**

This Congress calls on the GMB to mount a campaign to both expose the abuse of domestic workers and to recruit them to our union to give them a strong united voice.

One hundred years ago, the largest employment sector was Domestic Service, pampering and serving the needs of the great and the good (i.e. the rich and powerful).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, although the terminology and job titles may have changed, Domestic Service still exists. Just as in the past, exploitation of these workers is rife, with pay often below the minimum wage, workers with little or no recognised rights and suffering abuse. Low paid; usually women and mainly foreign workers are used as skivvies.

By its very nature, this dark secret of the upper echelons of society is well hidden. It's difficult to identify and to unionise such workers. However, the GMB has a history of organising those considered impossible to organise. The GMB should rise to this challenge.

PARKGATE BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, British television has a penchant for nostalgia. The latest offering is Downton Abbey, an everyday story of aristocrats being awfully nice to their servants. The reality, however, was very different. Rather than being valued, servants were at best regarded as simply household appliances, pretty much like you look at your vacuum cleaner or your washing machine today. At worst, they suffered physical, mental, and sexual abuse. Don't ever think this is a thing of the past. They may be called au pairs, home helps, or nannies, but domestic service continues and the exploitation and abuse also continues.

Health and Safety legislation and the Working Time Directive do not apply to domestic workers leading to high levels of stress, burns, and chronic back and shoulder injuries. The majority of those working as domestics are women, many of them migrants, a number of who are being trafficked with households with diplomatic immunity reportedly the worst abusers of domestic workers.

In 1998, the Labour Government introduced the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa, giving migrant domestic workers the opportunity to leave abusive employers and find other domestic work without having the threat of deportation over their heads. The ConDem Government not only got rid of the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa but actually encouraged trafficking and exploitation by refusing to implement the International Labour Organisation Convention on decent work for domestic workers.

So, who will look out for domestic workers? Who is going to stand up for them and who is going to them a voice? Why not the GMB? Yes, it is going to be difficult, impossible even, after all how do we identify domestic workers and uncover their hidden exploitation? Well, they told Will Thorne and Eleanor Marx it would be impossible to recruit and organise a general union and women workers, but they did, we are still here, and we are still doing the impossible. This union has a proud record of standing up for the oppressed and exploited. Let's continue with this record. Let's give domestic workers the support they need. Let's give domestic workers the voice they require. Let's give them hope. Let's end their exploitation now. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Secunder?

BRO. J. SHIELD (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): The upstairs/downstairs mentality still exists today. The job titles of yesteryear, housemaids, cooks, servants, are now replaced with au pair, nanny, and cleaner. This mostly migrant workforce is being exploited by the rich and famous leaving them with no hope of escaping from what amounts to legalised slavery. These private domestic workers continue to be excluded from British health and safety legislation, leaving them vulnerable and with no one to turn to for help. We must urge this Government to follow the example of other countries where inspections of private homes take place. Our union needs to highlight the plight of the hidden workforce and fight to get them the rights and protection most people take for granted. Let's take up this challenge and get these workers recruited to our union. I second motion 20. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Jim. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? Thank you. Can I call Martin Smith? While Martin is coming to the rostrum, could we wish Julie Hunt in the London Region a Happy Birthday? Happy Birthday, Julie. *(Applause)*

BRO. M. SMITH (National Organising Officer): On motion 19 the CEC is asking Congress to support and on motion 20 to support with a qualification. Motion 19 is a reminder of the need to implement one of the founding principles of GMB@Work that our objective is actually to build a sustainable workplace organisation that will stand the test of time with enough well-trained and supportive workplace organisers of all types to deliver ongoing recruitment, retention, and representation where they work. I can say it is now due for us to report to Congress in the spirit of that motion on the great successes we have had just since 1<sup>st</sup> May this year and I know you will join us in welcoming 1,500 brand new members in Asda stores that have joined us in the last month because of the access that we secured over many, many years; 1,500 people have joined us in stores and that is more than we have had over the past few years put together.

There has been a change in attitude by Asda but also we have to understand that 1,500 people do not join us in Asda stores just because we have the best looking union officials in the Movement. There is a reason why 1,500 people joined. More important in the spirit of the motion is that dozens of those people already in less than a month have come forward to volunteer to be shop stewards, safety reps, and workplace organisers, and that is how we are going to build into the long-term in Asda; that is how we are going to build into the long-term in every other workplace where we are struggling and fighting.

On motion 20, the Executive is asking Congress to support the motion with a qualification. The work done by existing organisations to expose the abuse of domestic workers, such as Kalayaan and the Justice for Domestic Workers Campaign, needs to be acknowledged. The qualification to the motion is that what we should do first is work with these campaigning organisations to establish three practical questions. The first is, what practical access can we get to these domestic workers to talk to them about the issues that they face, which of the many challenges and issues and attacks they face we may be able to build a winnable and inclusive campaign around, and then how we can build the momentum we need around that campaign to actually convert it into GMB members and GMB activists. Congress, we know that with the best will in the world we cannot build a union for people, we have to build a union with people. At the same time, Congress, we also remember they said we would never organise minicab drivers, and they said we would never organise British Gas engineers, and they said we would never organise security guards, and we have actually had delegates at this Congress speaking from those industries proving that most of the things they say we cannot do we can do if we put our mind to it. With this qualification, the Executive is asking you to support motion 20. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Martin. Does Yorkshire Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you very much. Can I now put motions 19 and 20 to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Motion 19 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 20 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now call motions 63 and 64, Yorkshire and North West and Irish Region and while they are coming down can I announce that Birmingham West Midlands raffle is ticket pink 26-30, so please go to the Birmingham Region stall to claim your prize. Thank you.

**UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
WORKING CLASS EDUCATION  
MOTION 63**

**63. WORKING CLASS EDUCATION**

This Congress calls on the CEC to support efforts to revive and strengthen independent working class education within the GMB. At a time when little formal education is taught to challenge the social and economic orthodoxy it is important that we learn the lessons of history and of trade unions' political and economic growth. We call on the CEC to produce a report for Congress 2014 setting out existing provision and opportunities to work within the GMB and with outside partners to better represent workers history and alternative economic theories to a new generation of GMB activists and members.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. M. HOBSON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): First-time delegate, second-time speaker. *(Applause)* President, Congress, this Congress calls on the CEC to support efforts to revive and strengthen independent working class education within the GMB. At a time when little formal education is taught to challenge the social and economic orthodoxy it is important that we learn the lessons of our history and of trade unions. We call on the CEC to produce a report for Congress 2014 setting out existing provision and opportunities to work within the GMB and outside partners to better represent workers' history and alternative economic theories to a new generation of GMB activists and members.

This motion seeks to strengthen the political and industrial position of our union. It seeks to better equip our new and younger activists to challenge the teachings of the main political parties and mainstream education in this country. When has mass unemployment, poverty pay, the role of women workers, health and safety, local government, and political power not been issues for us? These fights have been with us for 10 years, 20 years, and even 120 years. For many of us our activism was founded in our past and inspired us to change our future. This year has seen anniversaries and news items of fights in our past, Orgreave, the Clay Cross rent strikes, Wapping, and Hillsborough tragedy, have all hit the headlines.

To our younger members and activists these appeared as items of almost ancient history and it struck me how little knowledge we as a Movement have passed on. In economics, how many people know that in 1945 this country had a deficit twice as large in percentage terms as today but still managed to introduce the NHS and the welfare state? How many people know that banks create more money than governments and how much the bank bailout really cost us?

This motion calls on the CEC to look how history and alternative economics can be reintroduced as part of our education programmes for new activists and stewards. We request a report back to Congress next year on measures that can be implemented nationally. Partner organisations such as GFTU and other unions can also play a role in helping spread the education programme in ours and other unions. With e-learning, reading lists, and oral history as alternatives to class-based teaching there are many new ways to educate. A new website, an independent working class education network has recently been launched and is running network events around the country and is seeking support. There is a thirst for knowledge of our history and not for the orthodoxy of Gove, Osborne, Balls and Miliband, let us give our new activists the fire in the belly that drove ours and other unions to change our society for the better. I recommend this motion to Congress and look forward to a report from CEC next year. *(Applause)*

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

SIS. S. CARTER (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, let us never forget our struggle and our history and what it has taught us. We must educate people so that they do not have to live their lives similar to our ancestors. My great great grandparents lost six children all before the



age of three due to the poor living conditions present in Sheffield at that time. There was little education, no NHS, no votes for women, and a distinct lack of any health and safety if you happened to have a job. If you were really down on your luck then the workhouse beckoned.

When I travel through the areas of Sheffield now that my ancestors once lived in, I often think about the hardships they faced. I like to think that they would be proud of where their great granddaughter has ended up with a decent education behind me and a welfare state to support me in hard times. I am pretty sure that they would be horrified to see people go back to Victorian values and a return to the conditions that they lived in. What I find worrying these days are the young people who would not have a clue about how we used to live because modern history taught in our schools these days does not generally mention the horrors that our ancestors lived through. I took the time to sit down with a friend in their 20s recently who could not understand why I disliked Thatcher so much or why I would want to celebrate her death. It was not until I told them what she had done to working people in their communities that they understood why I would want to celebrate her death.

What worries me now is that for far too long people in this country are becoming punch drunk, they are fobbed off all too easily by the Government and the media message that cutbacks to much needed services are all we can do because we need to get the economy back on track. An educated person who knows about the past knows this to be hogwash. If people are educated, then they can clearly see that they are being lied to on a grand scale. They become empowered, more informed, and can organise themselves and become stronger. By not educating people about our past history and victories against hard times, it keeps us working people complacent and war weary, and we do this at our peril. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Motion 64, GMB Work Clubs.

## **GMB WORK CLUBS MOTION 64**

### **64. GMB WORK CLUBS**

This Congress calls upon the GMB to actively work with partners and our members who are in need due to the recession, to develop support services and GMB “work clubs” to assist them back into employment.

We are concerned that many contractors are engaged in tick box exercises without addressing the real needs of the member. It has been revealed that some of the private agencies running the work programme are ‘parking’ disabled job seekers and offering a very poor service despite substantial funding to help people back in work funded for by the tax payers. The Union can be at the forefront of demonstrating our commitment to members and the wider community in and out of work through the wider partnerships and services identified in establishing GMB “work clubs”.

We ask Branches and Regions to work with Union Learning Projects and other partners to ensure that a range of good quality services and support mechanisms are established in their areas, where possible supported and run by the Union members themselves.

Q22 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH  
*North West & Irish Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): With great pleasure I move motion 64 on GMB Work Clubs. Congress, do we think unemployment destroys dignity? (*Yes.*) Do you think that redundancy destroys lives? (*Yes.*) Thank you. He is vocal this morning. He was obviously in good form last night.

Congress, this simple motion asks us to build that essential bridge between our organisation and those who are unemployed and those who are made redundant, at the most important time of need, when their dignity has been stripped away because of unemployment, but worse, their dignity is further stripped away because of the way they are treated often in job centres, the way they are treated as numbers, the way they are asked to fill in forms when actually they are struggling with their basic education, and increasingly even to access their benefits they have to go online. We can actually build a bridge that builds hope and dignity for the people that we represent and build real hope in communities.

I take great pleasure in the learning and hope that we have developed at Oldham; with the region, with the support of our regional secretary, we have built a network of learning centres. Those learning centres have become centres for hope. They have actually given us a chance to build those bridges. We are actually asking colleges who hold the contracts and other providers for redundancy why are you not going out and serving these people where they are, instead of forcing them to come into locations remote from them. It can be done, it should be done; it is essential.

Jitz, in Preston recently was made unemployed by Tetrad. He was worried. Ten years, ten years, and his family was under threat. Very quickly we were able to sort out some basic training for him. We were able to teach him how to look at his income and expenditure, to develop spreadsheets, all using the skills within the GMB already. Jitz, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April opened his own little business in Preston serving that community, Jitz Place. There was nobody more delighted than the ULF team, and the reach out team, for seeing that happen.

If you want to build bridges, get that magazine, *The Glue*, the thing that sticks things together for communities and for training our communities, the story about how GMB is building bridges with our communities. Take that publication from the Union Learning stall and go back and apply it. I don't want you just to pass this motion, I want you actually to action it in every area of the country because when you actually serve our members when they are in greatest need you add real value to the membership card. Congress, I ask you not just to put your hands up, go out there, build the bridges, and give real hope to these people and to our communities; at a time of need they will not forget that we were there. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Secunder? Colleagues, while the seconder is coming to the platform, a pair of glasses were found yesterday. We have left them at the Information Desk so whoever has lost a pair of glasses that is where they are.

SIS. A. MURPHY (North West & Irish): This Congress calls upon the GMB to work with members who are in need due to the recession, to get assistance to get them back into employment by developing GMB work clubs. Some contractors engaged by the Government are only bothered about tick box exercises. They do not address the real needs of our members. Some of these contractors from private agencies who run these programmes are offering very poor service, especially to disabled members and job seekers, even though they receive adequate and very generous funding from the taxpayer. I call upon Congress to support this very important motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Angela. Anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? While I am calling James Stribley for the CEC, to speak on motion 64, can I tell you that I will next be calling composite 19, Yorkshire Region, Northern to second, 283, Council Housing, 284, Landlords, 285, Transport Invoicing. Thank you. Hi, James.

BRO. J. STRIBLEY (CEC, Manufacturing): President, Congress, a proud Remploy worker still here, still fighting. (*Applause*) Speaking on behalf of the CEC, we are supporting motion 64 but with a qualification. Motion 64 highlights the role that GMB branches and regions can play in supporting

members who have become unemployed due to the recession. Just like the people who were sacked by Remploy, the motion expresses concern that many private agencies do not provide the unemployed and the disabled with assistance to rejoin the workforce.

The motion calls on the GMB at the forefront of supporting those communities by working actively with members, partners, and Union Learning projects to establish work clubs which can provide a range of services to assist the unemployed to return to work as quickly as possible. These are being done with some success in the North West and Irish Region, and the Yorkshire Region, as part of the Union Learning projects. By using the clubs, GMB members who have lost their jobs get the opportunity to rejoin alternative employment, as was the case with Dulux members in Yorkshire.

GMB involvement in work clubs brings opportunities that would otherwise not be there to gain the essential skills required to stand out in today's cutthroat job market. Work clubs often help with CV-writing and help with applying for jobs and employability training. The work clubs also raise the profile and value of being a trade union member for unemployed members of the community who attend alongside training young members. Let GMB get the funding, not the employers.

The qualification is that the motion calls on the GMB to establish work clubs to assist our unemployed members to secure work. Before committing branches and regions to do this it would be sensible to look at these initiatives in order to assess the feasibility of expanding this across the union, including any likely impact and cost. So, in conclusion, Congress, the CEC is asking you to support motion 64 but with the qualification I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, James. Does North West and Irish Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Can I now put 63 and 64 to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against?

*Motion 63 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 64 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask for the mover, Yorkshire Region, of Composite 19, Social Housing?

**SOCIAL POLICY: HOUSING**  
**SOCIAL HOUSING PROGRAMME AND “THE GREEN DEAL”**  
**COMPOSITE 19**

**C19 Covering Motions:**

- 281. SOCIAL HOUSING AND ‘THE GREEN DEAL’ (*Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region*)
- 282. HOUSE-BUILDING PROGRAMME (*Northern Region*)

**SOCIAL HOUSING PROGRAMME AND ‘THE GREEN DEAL’**

This Congress recognises the value of Social Housing to the community.

It condemns the Tory led government policy on ‘right to buy’ which will seriously reduce the social housing availability and add to the 1.7 million people in England alone on the ever-growing council house waiting list.

This Congress agrees there is a need for a major house-building programme in many parts of the UK. It recognises that the social housing shortage can only be addressed by a massive programme of house building and that this must be built by directly employed workers and to the highest environmental and sustainable standards of this National Code for Sustainable Homes.

Congress, also, recognises that the Government's new homes bonus scheme has failed and agrees that the GMB, along with other trades unions, should make representation to the Government to introduce a fairer system that will encourage house-building in areas of genuine need. It's no good leaving the market to decide, that's what's got us into this mess!

Therefore, Congress urges the TUC to mount a campaign to achieve this programme and call on the GMB at all levels to campaign with 'Defend Council Housing' against the continued sell off and to lobby government and local authorities to build new housing to the National Code.

*(Carried)*

BRO. C. GILL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, in the 1980s we saw the great Thatcher socialist policy of owning your own home. You remember it? Hailed by the Tories as giving every English person the right to own their own castle, but it was a sham, colleagues. As we said at the time, it was doomed to failure and would only be exploited, and that is exactly what happened. What we have now in 2013 as a result of the policy is a massive shortage of social housing, or as we all know it, council housing. What happened was that already wealthy landlords, many of them Tory MPs or their families, bought large numbers of council houses. The 1980s and 1990s saw property prices rise at an unsustainable rate and then the housing bubble burst.

What this resulted in are ordinary working class people with families who cannot even dream of buying a council house having no alternative but to rent. Guess who the landlords are, yes, you've got it, the same Tories who bought these council houses now cashing in on their so-called investment. What a disgrace and what a sham. Now 30 years later it is the same old Tory policy. As our General Secretary said yesterday, this Government has set aside £4bn for the rest of this parliament to build new social housing yet has budgeted for £96bn to pay Housing Benefit. What a joke.

People do not want benefits, they want their own council houses built by local government directly employed workers. Let's campaign against the continued selloff of council housing and campaign for a massive new programme of house-building which in turn will generate a desperately stagnating economy and get it moving. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Secunder?

BRO. B. TAYLOR (Northern): Congress, the decision made by this Tory-led government to invest £1bn in a house-building scheme would normally be very welcome. However, when we take a closer look at the details, we realise that Eric Pickles, the Minister for Communities, has not given much thought to the scheme. I might say that this is typical of how this Tory-led government operates across the board. A perfect example is their decision to abolish Labour's *Building Schools for the Future* programme. There is no logic and no regional or local policy in what they are doing. Money for housing is being diverted from the north to the more prosperous south.

Congress, this country is in desperate need of capital investment to kick-start the economy and to support and revive communities across the UK. More and more families and young people need a helping hand to get onto the housing ladder. Affordable housing is desperately needed for first-time buyers and also for people who want to rent. We predicted at the last General Election what a Tory government would be like. It has already been estimated by independent organisations, such as the Institute for Personal Development, that the Government's austerity measures would result in the loss of 1.6m jobs.

Congress, the wholesale scrapping of construction projects, which has been happening since the Tory-led government came into office in 2010, should not be the price we pay for bailing out the banks. This Government should be actively encouraging banks to lend more money to kick-start the economy. The construction industry needs help now from this Government to encourage and support investment in house-building. Owen Jones this week summed up in two words what I have just said about housing, he said, it was “growth” and “community”. The other thing he pointed out was that the renting private sector has doubled in the last five years. Please support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bernie. Motion 283, Northern Region.

## **COUNCIL HOUSING MOTION 283**

### **283. COUNCIL HOUSING**

This Congress calls on Government to provide Direct investment in council housing as a matter of urgency - write off historic HRA housing debt to enable new council housing Defend security of tenure for existing and future tenants, ensure No eviction of tenants in rent arrears due to Housing Benefit cuts and enable Investment in a massive programme of new and improved, energy efficient council house building.

DURHAM COUNTY LA BRANCH  
*Northern Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. Y. MORRIS (Northern): Congress, for too long, going back to the start of the right to buy, council housing has been the Cinderella option to the terms of different types of housing available. Successive governments, Tory, Labour, and now the Coalition, never trusted local authorities to deliver and maintain a decent housing stock. Since the early 1980s, councils have had to send the proceeds of council house sales, as well as receipts on the council rents, back to Whitehall into a central pot of money. Whitehall dictated where new social housing investment was to take place. The result was that areas like the Northern Region lost out as money was recycled to other areas of the country, many to where the population was greatest. That is the reality of the housing policies in the last 30 years. It is no wonder that young people have trouble getting a roof over their heads. It is no wonder that housing waiting lists are going up.

Congress, what has made the housing situation worse in the UK has been two further factors: one, the relentless march of home ownership, and we have seen where the massive increase in the level of housing debt has got us in the last few years; the other is the increase of private and registered social landlords. Congress, if the last few years have taught us anything it is that the need for a fourth type of housing is desperately needed that is called council housing. The situation is so dire that from time to time there is a need for a housing policy that is a landmark in its nature. That time is now, to bring stability to the housing market, to help people starting out, and to help communities. It is vital that Whitehall gives away power and resources to the local people. Congress, we need council houses back as an option. We need politicians to be big enough to give local people a say once again over their housing needs. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Yvonne. Well done. Secunder?

BRO. P. RAMSAY (Northern): Congress, the current economic crisis has made a bad situation in housing much worse. House prices are still struggling in many parts of the country. At the same time, people cannot get a mortgage because either they do not have a permanent job or do not have the deposit many mortgage lenders are asking for. Private rental properties often charge high rents and are often not maintained to a good standard. Social housing, no matter what type of provision, is almost impossible to get, especially in rural and high priced urban areas. What is worse is there have

been instances of rich people buying up under the right to buy just so they can rent out and rake in a profit.

Congress, this is an immoral situation. It is essential that local authorities are given the necessary financial approvals to build council houses again. That includes writing off debt. The Government needs to abandon its faith in private ownership as the only way forward. The control and management of social housing need to be back in the hands of local authorities. The Government need to give local people a say in their communities by removing all of the obstacles to allow councils to build houses again. It would provide jobs in the construction industry, affordable housing, and well-managed housing.

Congress, never again must we allow ourselves to get into this situation where young families cannot afford to buy, to leave their parents' home, and cannot find suitable rented accommodation. The bedroom tax and the right-wing Tory Party's view about the elderly moving out of their accommodation are making the housing situation worse, not better. Let's show we are standing up for decent, affordable council housing for all our communities. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Paul. Motion 284?

## **LANDLORDS MOTION 284**

### **284. LANDLORDS**

That this Branch believes that the letting industry is totally out of control – from corrupt lettings agencies to dodgy landlords through to sky high rents for dirty, dismal and dangerous properties.

We call upon the next Labour Government to re-regulate the lettings industry and reinstate Fair Rent Officers.

In the interim period, we urge GMB sponsored MP's to actively campaign within the Houses of Parliament to these ends.

MANCHESTER 115 BRANCH  
*North West & Irish Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Sadly, the demise of the housing market and the financial crisis has left many of our young people, and older people, moving into private rented accommodation. The housing benefits cuts have forced more and more people out of their homes into inadequate accommodation. The bedroom tax has forced people to move unnecessarily because they cannot afford to stay where they are, and moving into inadequate housing, most of that, nearly all of it, controlled by private landlords.

The time has come for the landlords to stop taking the exorbitant rents, in our area it is round about £650 a month, in the southern areas it is £800 to £1,000 a month, and more, massive, massive rents, and yet often in situations where the landlords are taking the money but not the responsibility. That has to stop. Why should people in modern Britain live in mouldy damp houses? Why should they live in shanty towns? I say that, shanty towns. We have seen properties having garages and outhouses added just so that they can pack more people in and charge per room, per room, £600, and £500, and often it is the marginalised and the excluded, and the migrant workers who are in those properties.

The Government response, brilliant, brilliant, what do you do, "I think we should relax planning regulations so that you can actually add more on to your properties." That was their response until the Green Belt brigade decided it was a bit too dodgy. They are still trying it. They want to add more

and more unplanned extensions in properties so that others can make a profit on the basic needs of ordinary individuals and people who need basic housing. What a disgrace. This motion calls for regulation of the industry. It calls for fair rents to be monitored. It calls for inspections of property so that people do not have to live in these inadequate and inhuman conditions that they are asked to live in for an exorbitant price.

Congress, go out and look on your high street, look at the number of billboards asking for new landlords, it is drawing more and more people into the market, it is drawing more and more landlords in who are often buying up the social housing to then rent it back at three times the price that the tenants were paying in the first place. What a madness; what an absolute madness. It is a disgrace, nothing short of a disgrace. Congress, the time has come for the shower in Number 10 to act and start to deal with people with dignity. We are not minions. We are not slaves. We are not beasts of burden. We are human people and treat us as such. Congress, move this and regulate the industry of the landlords. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Secunder? Secunder? Formally? Thank you.

*Motion 284 was formally seconded.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Motion 285, London Region.

## **TRANSPARENT INVOICING MOTION 285**

### **285. TRANSPARENT INVOICING**

Congress asks the CEC to campaign for transparent invoicing on payments such as Council Tax and National Insurance.

Many of us pay Council Tax bills and yet we fail to see where this money is being spent. Anyone who pays any bill is entitled to see what the payment is actually for in broken down terms. However, when it comes to payments like Council Tax or deductions from wages for National Insurance we don't know where our money is being used.

Council Tax payments must show the cost to the individual household for each service it is used for such as refuse collection, housing repairs, youth provision, and so on, and in the same terms we should be pushing Government to give us individual details on the deductions from our wages of National Insurance payments, such as how much is used for the NHS and how much for defence.

ISLINGTON 1 & HARINGEY BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Referred)*

BRO. G. SHARKEY (London): Congress, remember back to March when your council tax bill flopped through your letter box and onto your door mat, you opened the envelope with dread waiting to see how much it had gone up by, despite the fact you have not had a pay rise for the last three years. If you live in a London borough, a non-unitary authority, with the bill comes a number of leaflets, leaflets that are supposed to explain the difference between, say, the council tax for your local council and the precept for the London City Hall, or elsewhere, the precept for the county council or the Police and Crime Commissioner, but do any of these leaflets really explain how your council tax is going to be spent and how it was spent last year? If you pay for a service you deserve a clear explanation of what you are paying for. We are not anti-taxation, in fact like Paul Kenny said on Tuesday, we should all be paying what is due to fund a civilised society, including all those local schools and bin collections that we rely on, but we do deserve clear and transparent invoices,

invoices that clearly set out what we are paying, and also clearly lay out what we are paying for. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, George. Secunder?

BRO. D. GILLIGAN (London): Congress, we are all stakeholders. *(Applause)* We pay our council tax for local utilities, such as refuse collection, street lighting, highways and road sweeping. As a stakeholder we should be able to see the accounts, expenditure and income. With that information, we can challenge how our money is spent. Is it too much to ask for invoices that are clear and transparent, I don't think so. Do you? I second motion 285. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mr. NHS. Thanks, Dean. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? Okay, can I call Paul Wheatley, CEC, on motion 285? Paul.

BRO. P. WHEATLEY (CEC, Manufacturing): The CEC is asking Congress to refer motion 285, the reason being that the motion calls for transparent invoicing for council tax and National Insurance bills in terms of how the money is spent on individual bills. As this is a new policy, it needs to be investigated to assert on how practical this could be for councils, not only to implement but also what added financial pressure could arise from such an implementation given the cuts imposed on local authorities from central government. Congress, given that this needs to be looked into in more detail, the CEC asks you to agree for motion 285 to be referred. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Will London agree to refer? *(Agreed)* Thank you very much. Congress agree to accept? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Can I now put composite 19, motion 283 and 284 to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are carried.

*Composite 19 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 283 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 284 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 285 was REFERRED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask Wales and South West Region to move 128, National Campaign Opposing Modern Slave Labour.

**EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK  
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN OPPOSING MODERN SLAVE LABOUR UNDER THE  
DISGUISE OF TRAINING WORK EXPERIENCE  
MOTION 128**

**128. NATIONAL CAMPAIGN OPPOSING MODERN SLAVE LABOUR UNDER THE DISGUISE OF  
TRAINING WORK EXPERIENCE**

This Congress is opposed to any kind of workplace exploitation of labour and is concerned about the increased practices of many organisations from the smallest of employer to multi-corporations that use all manner of headings to employ young people for zero or little reward therefore, we call upon GMB to initiate a national campaign to put a stop to such unfair practices that take advantage of the high unemployment and competitiveness for jobs and opportunities both amongst the youth academia and artisans of our country. We wish to achieve an acceptable position where training and experience can be reasonably affordable to companies and opportunities with a recognised pay structure available to our youth.

- No to graduates already encumbered with debt having to take voluntary training positions just to get recognised experience for their CV.



- No to any kind of long term unemployed training that does not result in a credible qualification unless such comes with a minimum living wage opportunity guaranteed.
- No to long hours for poorly or unpaid trainees within the Community Care or Health Sectors. Campaigning to get all employing organisations regardless of size to claim its responsibility of paying a living wage and training and developing future generations, thereby ensuring they retain the skill base that will continue their business.

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF BRANCH  
Wales & South West Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. J. SMITH (Wales and South West): A new study of 2,000 students reveals that 16% of them have worked for no pay reward in the last year in order to gain experience whilst not being aware that it was illegal for employers to give them work experience but not to pay them. The fact is that with competition at an all time high and demand for graduate positions exceeding supply, employers are looking for more than just a good degree and often require work experience as evidence of skills, commitment, and career understanding of candidates. Far too many employers are unaware of the law relating to work experience or are deliberately exploiting young people who are simply trying to advance themselves up the employment ladder by gaining vital experience at work.

Before the national minimum wage was introduced, many sectors such as media and advertising especially offered unpaid work experience but in recent years the number of employers offering unpaid internships has increased, no doubt as a way of cutting costs in testing economic times. Using students for unpaid work experience should not fall foul of national minimum wage regulations. Although there are exceptions, such as apprentices on government-arranged training schemes, student workers should not be deprived of wage payments when doing work experience. Some rogue employers will try to avoid paying students the minimum wage by arguing they are not a worker as defined in the regulations, but in most cases they should be unable to do this. The term “worker” covers not just employees but any other person who agrees to perform work personally for another. However, not only does unpaid work break the employment law, it also contributes towards restricting social mobility because students and graduates from lower social economic groups and backgrounds are less likely to be able to take up vacancies on an unpaid basis. Whilst employers claim that there is a grey area around internships, in the wage legislation that allows them to take on unpaid interns as long as both parties understand it to be a voluntary position this is simply not the case. The law is in fact very clear on this point but the problem is one of failure of enforcement.

In conclusion, there are far too many industries that rely upon the willingness of young people to work for free. In the long run this is bad for business too as it damages their reputation and eventually makes it more difficult to recruit from the broadest pool of talent available. Unsurprisingly, unpaid work arrangements provide for an instant advantage to those from good family connections when it comes to finding a permanent job. Young people generally have been the biggest victims of this Coalition-induced recession and the exploitation of interns is completely unacceptable. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jenny. Secunder?

BRO. P. HUGHES (Wales and South West): First-time speaker, first-time delegate. *(Applause)* President, Congress, there is very little to add to what Jenny has said and the telling points she has made. Exploitation of vulnerable and less privileged people in society is a characteristic of a government for whom class is an important indicator of entitlement. Everyone has to start somewhere as far as the world of work is concerned and in a contracting economy it is a major struggle to compete for paid jobs. Being willing to work for nothing is very understandable but no less

acceptable. Too many graduates seeking full-time work are unpaid with employers refusing to pay them the minimum wage or any expenses. Most interns work very hard doing essential work tasks but firms simply use them to reduce costs and as a substitute for real jobs. People should be given a chance to learn as much as possible during the period of their training but it must be more than being offered simply unpaid work.

The main concerns about abuse of work experience are how unemployed people are required to do a few days work for no pay, with no training, and no expectations of an interview, let alone a job offer. When this happens I strongly suspect that unemployed people are just being used to provide unpaid labour and it is very unlikely that it does anything to help them get real jobs. We are also really concerned and opposed to work experience that is imposed as a penalty for becoming long-term unemployed. There is no evidence that it helps long-term unemployed people get jobs. Too many employment programmes assume that unemployed people are either a problem to be solved or are guilty of causing their own unemployment. These programmes presume that unemployed people have a motivation problem and that the answer is to make unemployment even more unattractive than it already is; the same attitude that inspired the workhouses. Exploitation is simply and totally unacceptable and must be eradicated. Congress, please support. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Phil. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? Can I put it to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 128 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I ask the movers of 308, 309, and 310, Southern Region, London Region, and then Wales and South West Region.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: WELFARE RIGHTS AND SERVICES**

### **A CALL TO BOYCOTT WORKFARE SCHEMES**

#### **MOTION 308**

#### **308. A CALL TO BOYCOTT WORKFARE SCHEMES**

##### **Congress notes:**

- There are currently several schemes which place benefit claimants on compulsory work placements including: mandatory work activity, the DWP's 'Work Experience' programme and 'Community Action Programme', and all of what is mandated by the private companies running the Work Programme including A4E and Avanta.
- All of these schemes force a claimant to work **without pay** and on threat of loss of benefits if they refuse to participate.
- As well as this being an attack on claimants, it is also an attack on workers, as free, government subsidised labour inevitably pushes down wages and terms and conditions, and ultimately replaces paid jobs.

##### **Congress condemns:**

All those employers who profit from the unpaid labour these schemes require, including retailers such as Poundland, Superdrug and Asda; charities including British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research; and local authorities, including Labour run Newham and Haringey Councils.

##### **Congress applauds:**

- Both Unite and PCS trade unions who have already pledged a boycott of workfare placements.
- The innovative and inspiring action by groups such as Boycott Workfare, Solidarity Federation, and many claimants groups, whose persistent pickets and campaigning has so far caused both Oxfam and Holland & Barrett to bow to pressure and pull out of the schemes.

- The motion passed at the Trades Union Councils Annual Conference 2012 which resolved to support the call for a boycott of workfare placements.

**Congress resolves to:**

- Officially affiliate to the Boycott Workfare campaign.
- Recognise that the labour movement should be at the forefront of fighting this restructuring of the labour market, and therefore make this issue one of our campaigning priorities.
- Use our networks and media links to publicise this campaign, and name and shame those employers who participate in it.
- Publicise the details of different claimants support and campaign groups amongst our own union networks, branches and members.
- Encourage members to participate in local and national actions and demonstrations against workfare, and to advertise these widely.
- Use our links to the Labour Party to get them to pledge to abolish all of these schemes, and any other form of mandatory unpaid work if re-elected
- Recognise that as organised workers we should use our collective strength to act in solidarity with those claimants being exploited, by leading and supporting a boycott of workfare placements and all forms of compulsory unpaid work at a local level by all means necessary, up to and including industrial action.

B50 SUSSEX BRANCH  
Southern Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. H. SMITH (Southern): Congress, Workfare is a scheme introduced by New Labour and now expanded by the Tories that forces claimants on Job Seekers' Allowance to work without pay or face sanctions, which means a loss of their benefits and any income. Claimants are sent to work without pay in retailers like Poundland, Asda, and Tesco, for periods of anything from six weeks up to six months. As well as the moral scandal forcing people to work for free or face absolute poverty, then as trade unionists we must recognise this for what it is, a fundamental reshaping of our labour market. This form of free government-subsided labour pushes down wages, terms and conditions, undermines collective bargaining, and ultimately replaces paid jobs. Why would employers have a well-paid unionised workforce when they have an army of people who can be forced to work for them for free? This is not just an attack on claimants, this is also a direct attack on trade union organisation and goes against our fundamental principle of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. So, we should condemn all the employers who are exploiting and profiting from this free labour and we should also be condemning the Labour Party who are supporting it.

Two years ago a third of Labour Party-controlled Haringey Council Parks Department were made redundant and they were replaced by people on Workfare Schemes. In March, the Court of Appeal ruled that the Department for Work and Pensions had illegally sanctioned claimants on these schemes and the Government was told to cough up the backdated benefits to 231,000 people who had so far been sanctioned under this scheme. Rather than pay up the Tories put themselves above the law by retrospectively changing it to suit them so they did not have to pay the money back to the claimants. When it came to the vote on this in Parliament, Liam Byrne, Labour spokesperson on welfare, demanded that Labour MPs abstain from the vote and by a very few notable exceptions they did and so denied justice and financial compensation to those claimants. As someone who charged the taxpayer £2,400 a month to rent a flat overlooking the Thames, then I do not think Liam Byrne is in any position to be criticising the people he called "free riders".

But people are fighting back. The brilliant campaign group, Boycott Workfare, along with others like The Solidarity Federation, and local claimants groups, have already forced some retailers to pull out of this scheme. Whilst we should applaud the amazing work that these groups have been doing on

this issue, we should not leave it up to them. As a union we should show that as working people we stand in solidarity with those who are out of work. We need to make this scandal one of our campaigning priorities and we need to use our links to the Labour Party to make them pledge to abolish these schemes and any form of unpaid work completely, and this exploitation of working class people. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Holly. Secunder?

BRO. K. GREENAWAY (Southern): So, Workfare does not work, it does not get more people in jobs. It undermines the trade unions, it undermines our labour market, it perpetuates a race to the bottom, it is going to slash our terms and conditions, and it is going to lower pay. Why would you collectively bargain with the trade unions to get better conditions as an employer when you can have a free labour market there for you? Workfare only works as a supplier of free forced labour for big business. This is an issue where we need to force Labour's hand to get them to do something. They helped the Conservatives to bring it in so we cannot rely on them. We need to stand together in solidarity with our work comrades. If the penalties now are against the JSA when people do not go on Workfare issues, with the Universal Credit coming in then those penalties will reach further into our work comrades' pockets and will undermine their housing security and a lot more, and their general sort of wellbeing through the Universal Credit. We need to stand together with our work comrades and we can win on this issue. When people put pressure on the big businesses that do employ through Workfare then they have pulled out so we can win and we should fight together. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Keir. Motion 309, London Region. Vaughan.

## **WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKFARE SCHEMES MOTION 309**

### **309. WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKFARE SCHEMES**

Congress, opposes the Work Programme and Workfare Schemes.

We recognise that it is both an attempt to force unemployed workers to work for free, and an attempt to undermine wages and conditions for all workers.

Furthermore the Work Programme is the privatisation of unemployment, as providers are paid for each person referred to them.

The Work Programme has failed to help get unemployed people into work, with A4E helping just 4 percent of their customers into work.

Congress therefore agrees to call for the immediate cancellation of the Work Programme and demands that an incoming Labour Government abandons all such schemes and ensures that the living wage applies for all workers.

To support and publicise protests against the Work Programme.

To establish links with organised unemployed workers.

HOLBORN BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. V. WEST (London): Congress, if you did not believe that the nasty party was back then just look at the work programme. A firsthand work programme might look attractive giving unemployed

people work experience but the reality is somewhat different. Stories of unemployed graduates who are already volunteering but forced to stop and go shelf stacking, not that I am knocking shelf stackers, many of whom are our members, but the unemployed forced to work in minimum wage jobs for less than the minimum wage is a disgrace and could, if taken to its logical conclusion, threaten the real jobs of many people, our members, creating more unemployment. You can just see it now, somebody is made redundant on Friday and back in their old job, forced back on a work programme on the following Monday. That is also a disgrace. Does the work programme reduce unemployment? No, it does not but it does increase the profits of private training providers such as A4E. The work programme is nothing more than a scam, a scam to line the pockets of private training providers, a scam to provide big business with free labour, a scam to deceive us that the Tories are doing something about unemployment and, finally, a scam, as Owen Jones said, to demonise benefit claimants as scroungers. Expose the scam. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vaughan. Secunder?

SIS. P. MAKWANA (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* The Workfare Schemes give employment and an individual opportunity to gain much needed work experience and enable them to become equipped to join the ranks of the employed, so they say. There is little evidence that Workfare increases the likelihood of finding work. It can even reduce employment chances by limiting the time available for job search and by failing to provide the skills and experience valued by employers. Figures released by the Department of Work and Pensions show that 3.6% of people on the Workfare programme had found work. Workfare is not about helping people into work and Workfare does not create jobs, nor can it claim that these schemes are about saving money, rather we see Workfare as part of a long-term restructuring of the labour market towards more temporary lower paid jobs and with more poor conditions and fewer benefits. These reforms come at the expense of workers' lives but are considered meanwhile by those in power to support business. Workfare profits the big businesses by providing free labour while threatening the poor by taking away welfare rights if people refuse to work without a living wage. With Job Seekers' Allowance's highest rate at £67.50 someone on the Workfare Scheme is being paid as little as £1.76 an hour, far, far below the minimum wage. This is little more than slave labour. This scheme does not have legal rights of employment, no holidays, no sick pay, and no protection. Imagine being bullied and nowhere to turn and no way out. Is this how far we are going to progress? We urge Congress to support this motion and demand immediate cancellation for the Workfare programme. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 310, Wales and South West Region.

## **UNPAID WORK MOTION 310**

### **310. UNPAID WORK**

This Congress denounces the practise of unpaid work placements that some groups of unemployed people either must, or are encouraged to, take part in or risk losing their benefits. This is exploitation of unemployed people and also has an economic impact as it excludes other people who could be working for a fair and proper wage and putting something back into the economy by way of taxes and National Insurance contributions.

This is just another scheme where companies are getting workers on the cheap and we call on the CEC to lobby the Labour Party to condemn this and change this practise when they return to power.

MONMOUTH UTILITIES BRANCH  
Wales & South West Region

*(Carried)*

BRO. P. HUNT (Wales and South West): President, Congress, delegates will recall with understandable derision the so-called initiative labelled, Get Britain Working, introduced by this Government in January 2011. Welfare back to work schemes purported to help the unemployed return to work and acquire the vital workplace skills needed to obtain a job are the brainchild of a government who are experts in the field of worker exploitation. The reality is, as you would expect, something completely different, a form of American style workfare that amounts to nothing less than 21<sup>st</sup> century slave labour.

Workfare is pure exploitation with rates of pay less than the national minimum wage. It is blatantly unfair to paid workers who find themselves in labour market competition with their unpaid counterparts. It is a means by which those employers who choose not to use Workfare people find themselves competing on uneven terms with those who are effectively being subsidised. Academic studies of similar schemes in other countries clearly reveal how little chance there is of them increasing work prospects. Workfare is least effective in getting people back to work in weak labour markets where unemployment is high, as shown by only 20 extra jobs being created in the United Kingdom since its invention.

The case of Cait Reilly, a university graduate who was forced to give up voluntary work at a library and work for nothing in a local Poundland store stacking shelves and cleaning floors rather than lose her entitlement to Job Seekers' Allowance, a futile place void of any training and the chance to look for a proper job, the only beneficiary of which was a multimillion pound company able to obtain labour for nothing. The type of situation that is all too common whereby people are forced to do work completely unrelated to what they want to do and have no relevance whatsoever to their chosen careers, forced to undertake pointless unpaid labour with big firms who could easily afford to pay them the national minimum wage, Orwellian schemes that are totally in contravention of the basic tenet of employment, namely, the right to paid labour, and conflicts with what really should be the best way of returning people to employment, that is, by helping them and supporting them rather than punishing them.

Miss Reilly's success in a Court of Appeal claim, that making her work at Poundland was unlawful, has spurred the Government on in seeking an extension of the use of mandatory schemes and applying sanctions to the people who refuse to take part in them. New regulations avoid the risk that the scoundrel will overcome the ruling and allow the likes of Iain Duncan Smith the opportunity of turning the screw further on the so-called workshy welfare benefit claimants. Well, maybe he should try working for nothing. Maybe Harry Donaldson could find him a job turnip picking in Scotland at the height of winter, up to his knees in mud and water.

Seriously, colleagues, government penalties against benefit claimants are both immoral and unjust. Work placements must be about teaching people skills and not confining them to Victorian workplace practices of free slave labour for those firms already paying poverty wages. In conclusion, Labour support on this issue should be unequivocal too, no leadership sucking up to right-wing prejudice about the welfare state and no spineless position on reform. Genuinely supporting those in need is a much better Labour tradition than one of benefit bashing. Shame on those Labour MPs who followed the Whip's instruction to let the Workfare Bill pass through and to cheat thousands of poor people out of money the court had ruled they were due. What chance, then, of Labour reversing Workfare if they come to power in 2015, little prospect if Liam Byrne and his compliant members have anything to do with it. I will leave it at that. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Secunder?

SIS. J. BRADY (Wales and South West) seconded motion 310. She said: President, Congress, Workfare really is a worker prejudice face of this discredited government. Paul has referred you to

GMB's firm policy opposition to the ideology of this scheme which effectively represents a return to times when poor people went on the parish. Workfare placements embody a view that there is no value in allowing an unemployed claimant to work in a voluntary job, they choose them one to do. When employers, such as Tesco, are working to use unpaid staff to enhance their business profits, ironically by Tesco's own figures less than one in four of the claimants who work for Tesco for free succeed in getting a paid job at the end of the period, so the company gets the dosh for so-called training of unemployed people and the people themselves get no short or longer term benefits. However, enough criticism of a scheme of madness in a struggling economy, let me deal briefly with the part of this motion which relates to calling upon the CEC to lobby the Labour Party to condemn the Workfare Scheme itself. You would hope, wouldn't you, that Labour as the traditional party of the left would stand full square in opposition to cheapskate initiatives like Workfare. Unfortunately, the actions of Labour MPs in allowing the Workfare Bill to pass through, which really sets Government as above the law, is nothing short of a disgrace, retrospective legislation put in to make the Work and Pensions Department's unlawful actions on Workfare law and depriving a few thousand of the hard hit people in Britain of the equivalent of Duncan Smith's lunch expenses account, supported by a majority of Labour Members of the House. Credit to Paul Flynn and Madeleine Moon MPs from the South Wales part of our region who defied the Whip's instruction and voted against this dreadful bill. They can go on a roll of honour much, much shorter than the one of shame containing the names of the others who supported it. Perhaps they did not want to be seen as socialists who actually believe that employers should pay their workers. There can be no doubt that Labour's MPs were put under significant distress. Congress, the Labour Party must develop its own branded position on the Workfare and not struggle with the Tories' own perception of the benefit claimants. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Colleagues, will you please observe the lights? If we run over it will just make it a longer day and we will be running behind, as people this morning were ignoring. Thank you. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? Anyone else?

SIS. A. COUSIN (London) spoke in support of motion 309. She said: Congress, I work for Asda. For the past two years management has been constantly reminding us that we are trading in a very difficult climate and as a result they must keep the wages bill under tight control. In practice this means that on any day when it is deemed to be quiet, not as many customers shopping as they would like, we are all asked, "Would you like to go home early today?" It sounds great but what they really mean is clock out before your contracted shift end and we don't have to pay you. They even had the audacity last January to put up posters all over the walls and notice boards asking every worker to give up one hour a week because it is traditionally quiet and they wanted us to help them save money. Whilst it has not happened in my store yet, my members are worried that at some point Workfare Schemes will be seen by Asda management as the ideal way to control the wage bill. We have high unemployment in my area and few job opportunities so there are plenty of job seekers to exploit. By using them, forced to work for benefits on the checkout, on the replenishment team, the wages bill will be reduced but the customer service values they hold so high will be unaffected. I can understand they must control the wages bill, it must be very hard for the American Walton family, and that is not John Boy and his Ma and Pa by the way, who own Asda to get by in this recession. I am sure that using unpaid Workfare placements to help top up store profits will be very welcome to them because, after all, their family is trying to get by with only \$115.7bn in the bank. It must be tough. So, here is a thought. Maybe they could create some extra jobs in store, offer those on Workfare a real job alongside us and while we are at it they may want to dig deep and pay us all a living wage. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Allison. Next?

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland): The famous words of Scrooge, “Are there no workhouses,” “Are there are no prisons,” because that is what we are going back to. I remember my father telling me in the 1930s to get what he called his brew money, his dole money, he had to go and work and this is where we are going just now, and it is an absolute disgrace. If they had their way the Tories would open the workhouses tomorrow and people like me and the disabled that is where they would put us, into workhouses, comrades. We have to do something. Kids going out to work for nothing, how ridiculous is that? It is a travesty. I say support the motion. It is an absolute disgrace what this Tory Government is getting away with. I have said this before, we can talk here all we want, we can talk until we are blue in the face, but without action we are going nowhere. Thanks. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call on Mick Rix to speak on behalf of the CEC on 308 and 309? Mick.

BRO. M. RIX (National Officer): Good morning, President, Congress. The CEC is asking Congress to support motions 308 and 309, with qualifications.

Congress, you will all be aware of the failed policy of Workfare Schemes where unemployed people are made to do unpaid work in jobs that would normally be done by paid workers. Let me make this clear, Workfare does not help job seekers find work, it exploits those on benefits. Be assured that GMB is opposed to such schemes. Following Motion 84 passed at last year’s Congress, GMB works with the TUC to produce a Say No to the Workfare Charter, and we spoke on this at the TUC Congress in September.

Motion 308 outlines the failed Workfare policy and the CEC supports the sentiments of this motion in line with existing GMB policy and we would use our communications network to name and shame companies exploiting job seekers through the Workfare programme. (*Applause*) More importantly, not only have we passed motions, we have actually challenged companies. The qualification on motion 308 is that we have some reservations about the detail of the proposed boycott, which needs some clarification. For example, Asda have assured us in writing that they are not nationally participating in the Workfare programme and that they believe in the principle of paid work. Now, in light of that assurance GMB can play the role of making sure any local examples of participation in Workfare are immediately escalated to myself so I can ensure that the national policy that we have achieved with Asda is adhered to. I want to make this point, Allison, the things that you have raised, the day that we stop challenging bad bosses in the workplace is the day that we pack up and go home. (*Applause*)

Motion 309 calls for the cancellation of the Workfare programme, which is the existing policy, as well as for the Labour Party to implement a living wage for all workers over and above the minimum wage. There is nothing wrong with this sentiment. The qualification surrounds the practical difficulties of organising amongst unemployed workers.

Congress, let’s continue the fight against people on benefits being exploited by companies and the Government. Congress, please support motions 308 and 309 with the CEC qualifications. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mick. Does Southern Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you, Holly. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Can I now put 308 and 309, and 310, to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are carried.

*Motion 308 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 309 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 310 was CARRIED.*



THE PRESIDENT: I now move to the next part of the Agenda. I call Motions 263 and 264. We have no CEC speaker. Then I will be calling Composite 18.

**SOCIAL POLICY: GENERAL  
REDUCED COST CHILDCARE FACILITIES  
MOTION 263**

**263. REDUCED COST CHILDCARE FACILITIES**

This Congress notes that currently children under 4 do not receive full-time free childcare.

In some cases parents have to use annual leave, reduce their hours or in some cases finish work completely as the cost of childcare is disproportionate to their earnings.

We therefore call upon Congress to support this motion and propose that organisations look at having childcare facilities accessible for children who are under 4 at reduced cost.

NOTTINGHAM CITY BRANCH  
*Midland and East Coast Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. K. HUMPHREYS (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I move Motion 263 – Reduced Cost Childcare Facilities. In this present economic climate where wages are stagnant or reduced and the cost of living is ever increasing, we have a Government constantly saying that it pays to work. We have an ageing workforce due to changes surrounding the pensionable age and working parents can no longer rely on their parents to care for grandchildren. Instead, we have to use childcare facilities. Childcare, on average, is double the cost of an average mortgage. There are certain benefits available to assist with the cost of this, but they are dependent on whether you are a lone parent or not and are means tested in relation to income and not disposable income. Childcare is a necessity if you have to work. I believe that the Government should fund childcare providers direct and there should be a limit on what childcare providers can charge. Childcare providers are providing a public service and, therefore, they should be regarded as such. Free childcare places should not depend on whether or not you are in receipt of benefit but should be available to all parents on the days they are working. Childminders and nursing facilities are regulated by Ofsted and have regular inspections, as do our schools. Some providers charge extortionate rates to parents and yet the majority of their staff are on low pay. If the Government embraced this necessity within the public sector, it would be a fairer place to work in relation to terms and conditions, earnings, pensions etc., and fairer to working parents in relation to costs. Hopefully, it will be a lot cheaper, preferably free.

Before I move this motion, let me tell you who I am. I'm a single mum and I work full time. Why should the political leaders listen to me? It's because there are millions of me. I police your street, I educate your children, I work in the shops in your high streets, I work in the banks, I care for the sick, and that is just to name a few, because I am everywhere. I am angry, I am fed up with hitting by the cuts and I am getting organised. Please support this motion.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kerry. Secunder?

BRO. R. WILDING (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I second Motion 263 – Reduced Cost Childcare Facilities. More and more women have no choice but to give up work when they have had children simply because they cannot afford childcare costs. If the Government were to provide or encourage companies to make available childcare, then more women would be able to return to work. Women would return to the economy as paid workers. I ask you, please, to support this motion.  
*(Applause)*

## **PRE-SCHOOL NURSERY PLACES MOTION 264**

### **264. PRE-SCHOOL NURSERY PLACES**

This Congress is concerned that the Government are altering the staffing levels required in nursery schools. The proposed increase in the ratio of children to adults is a major risk to the safety of our children.

We ask our sponsored MPs to fight this at every opportunity, and to fight for subsidised affordable nursery places.

ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. C. HOLLAND (London): Congress, I move Motion 264 – Pre-School Nursery Places. Here we go again! Another bright idea from the Con-Dem Government. Let's think. "We'll increase the number of children the staff can look after." What a great move. These little tots need more attention, not less. How the brains of MPs work is beyond me. The thinking is that it will reduce costs. Rubbish! The owners will make more profit. The average cost of a nursery is between £800 - £1,000 a month, with prices ever increasing. They charge by the session throughout the day so it is impossible not to get clobbered by the maximum. In some cases, they allow only two weeks off a year and, in some cases, none.

I have supported two members recently who have issues. The first one is one capability, because her child had the nerve to get sick. Nurseries will not have children when they are ill. She had no choice but to take time off. Hence, the capability. The other one had two children, could not afford a nursery so employed a nanny in her home, only to find that her children had been neglected. It is scandalous. I have a daughter whose husband has elected to stay at home, otherwise my grandson, in going to a nursery, would have wiped out one of their salaries. What we are state-run nurseries that are not for profit. We need to help Britain back to work. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I have one further thing to say. It is about the living wage for Essex. It is one statement. Essex County Council has decided, since they offer other benefits – that may be 5% of the population of Essex County Council – they feel they do not have to offer the living wage. We are, obviously, campaigning for this.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. Seconder?

SIS. P. MAKWANA (London): Congress, I believe that my colleagues have no option other than to move this motion, although all of us know that we will be putting our children at risk. If this Government plans to reduce staff are carried through, the children ratio in nurseries will be increased. Currently, one adult can care up to four children, but under new performance designs, to put Britain into line with Europe, one high-quality staff member can oversee to six children. However, this does not include additional support for nursery nurses for feeding, cleaning and changing, as is available in France. There are serious concerns over lack of data on nursery deaths and injuries. No official records are kept on the numbers of deaths, serious injuries and accidents that occur while children are in nursery or any other settings. Ofsted do not require any reports to be kept on accidents unless they lead to hospitalisation. This means that numerous accidents can fly under the radar and it will not impact on the data on child safety.

Ofsted has a key responsibility to monitor, track and publish this information. In doing so, patterns will emerge and lessons will learnt. This is what providers need to help to fulfil our duty to keep our children safe. Let me quote: "Watering down the ratio and quality of pre-school nursery places with

carers, childcare may be cheaper but children will be footing the bill.” Please join and support the campaign by signing a Government-recognised petition against the change at [www.rewindonratios.com](http://www.rewindonratios.com). Once you have signed, please share this link with your friends and family. We ask sponsored MPs to fight this development at every opportunity and to fight for subsidised affordable nursery places for our future generation. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, does anyone want to speak in opposition to those two motions? (*No response*) The CEC is supporting both motions, and I will take the vote. All those in favour? Anyone against?

*Motion 263 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 264 was CARRIED.*

## **EDUCATION BIAS: ESCAPING THE POVERTY TRAP COMPOSITE 18**

### **C18. Covering Motions:**

277. MORE FUNDING REQUIRED FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES IN DEPRIVED AREAS TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND GIVE CHILDREN A BETTER CHANCE OF ESCAPING THE POVERTY TRAP (*Midland and East Coast Region*)

278. EDUCATION BIAS (*London Region*)

### **EDUCATION BIAS: ESCAPING THE POVERTY TRAP**

This Congress notes that the gulf between the poor and rich of the world is widening and is deeply concerned at the malevolent attitude of the Education Secretary, Michael Gove, towards the teaching profession, most especially those in the state sector. Our concerns are heightened as we see in this, his animosity towards the vast majority of working class children, and an extension of his financial prejudice against general state education.

Within the UK, the financial gap between the wealthy and the poor is not narrowing and differences in health between social classes are becoming greater. Poverty and social inequality have direct and indirect effects on the social, mental and physical well-being of an individual. It is important to note that poverty and inequality are closely linked. It is believed that income inequality produces psychosocial stress which leads to deteriorating health and higher mortality over time. Those who live in deprived communities, where there is under-investment in the social and physical infrastructure, experience poor health, resulting in higher mortality for those of lower socio-economic class. The effects of income inequality also spill over into society, causing stress, frustration and family disruption, which then increase the rates of crime, homicide and violence.

We therefore call upon Congress to support extra funding for schools in deprived areas and also the need for community funding for parenting classes/education for parents around health and nutrition and literacy.

(*Carried*)

BRO. D. JOBSON (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I move Composite 18 – Education Bias – Escaping the Poverty Trap. Sisters and brothers, during the past one hundred years there have been various pieces of research carried out into the effects of poverty in the working class, such as by Oscar Lewis and also the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Oscar Lewis was an American anthropologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who died over 40 years ago, but his theory, known as the *Cycle of Poverty* is, unfortunately, as relevant today as it was when it was first written. The majority of children born into poverty will remain in poverty throughout their lives, and the likelihood is that any children they have will also grow up in poverty, thus perpetuating the cycle.

One study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed that even the children who are being brought up in poverty are aware from an early age that not only are they likely to have less opportunities in education and life but that their own stereotyping will reinforce their situation. This is partly from a lack of support and encouragement by their peers and parents during their formative pre-school years, and throughout their school years. The current Government have no interest in making life better for those living in poverty. Indeed, they are actively making things worse.

Mr. Gove is doing his best to privatise state education with academies and free schools and dumbing down the education of the working class. Why? To put profit before people and to reduce the knowledge base of those in poverty, as he knows full well that knowledge brings power and the Tories want us powerless. Funding to local authorities has been reduced with more cuts still to come. The support that councils have give in previous years is under threat, which will only make things worse for those who need that support most. We shouldn't be making their prospects worse. We should be giving them more help and more support to increase their chance of a better life in society, not marginalised and turned into third-rate citizens or worse. The wealth members and supporters of the Tory Party don't want state education, neither do they want a welfare state nor a National Health Service. They only care about the profit going into their pockets. They don't care about people in poverty other than how much more money they can squeeze out of them. The Tories are going to far backwards in trying to go forward that, perhaps, they should be called the "Victory-am Party". We, therefore, call upon Congress to support greater funding for deprived areas, to improve the education of those in poverty at home and at school, so as to improve their health and literacy, which will go towards making a fairer society and help our citizens to escape the poverty trap. I urge you to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

BRO. S. MANN (London): Congress, I second Composite 18. It has long been known that Michael Gove is an opponent of state education. He has an unshakable, ideological belief that local councils should not run education, and that belief goes further in so far as only the cream of the pupils should be provided for and it does not matter about the rest. We see this with the introduction of free schools, schools which, even in deprived areas receive increased funding to the detrimental of maintained schools, and these free schools can cherry-pick the cream of the crop and obtain the best results. But, Congress, every child deserves the best education that this country can give them.

In every school there are teachers who are better than others, as indeed are the pupils, but our ideological sentiment is that all pupils must start on a level playing field. This relates to all pupils, no matter from what area, background, wealth or otherwise, and it is something that Gove is absolutely forbidding.

In London the Sir John Cass School in the City of London receives £9,372 per pupil. In nearby Hackney, which is deprived borough, the Brook Community School receives £7,811 per pupil. They City of London school is classed as "outstanding", but the Hackney school is not. Why do you think that is, colleagues? It is because of the formula that Gove gives to stifle education in poor areas and divert funding to people daft enough to support him in his party. I second Composite 18. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* I now put Composite 18 to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? I note that hands are getting tired this morning.

*Composite Motion 18 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can we now move to the next part of the agenda – Social Policy.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: WELFARE RIGHTS & SERVICES**

### **WELFARE REFORM**

#### **COMPOSITE 21**

##### **C21 Covering Motions:**

- 294. WELFARE REFORM (*Wales & South West Region*)
- 295. DEMEANING BENEFIT CLAIMANTS (*London Region*)
- 296. BENEFITS (*Northern Region*)

### **WELFARE REFORM**

This Congress deplores the Tories and Lib Dems in Coalition attacking the most vulnerable in Society with their benefits cuts. These cuts demonstrate that George Osborne's claims that "we are all in this together" are bogus and a bare-faced cheek.

This Congress is deeply concerned at the demeaning rhetoric used by Senior Coalition Politicians to vilify recipients of a wide range of benefits, many of whom are in low paid employment, pensioners, genuinely unemployed, or suffering ill health. Contrast this with the deafening silence from the same politicians about those employing every device and opportunity to avoid contributing to the National Purse by means of normal taxation. We are in no doubt that this rhetoric is a blind to cover their unnecessary economic attack on working people, designed to set worker against worker, against the unemployed and pensioners generally. Congress agrees we must challenge and highlight this situation.

This Congress calls upon the Labour Party to

- continue to denounce the implementation of all aspects of the Welfare Reform Act and make a commitment to amend this piece of legislation that in the main affects the most vulnerable in our society. It also wipes out the safety net in place to protect those, who in the main through no fault of their own, have to rely on state benefits to give them a basic standard of living. This abysmal piece of legislation will take our society back decades and must be amended by the next Labour Government.
- signal an unequivocal commitment to reverse these attacks on the needy as part of its policy-making programme for Government

*(Carried)*

BRO. J. SUTTON (Wales and South West): Congress, I move Composite 21, Welfare Reform. President, the Coalition's welfare plans will result in lower living standards not just for the unemployed but also for those on low to middle incomes at the same time as a number of bit companies are making record profits and avoiding paying tax. It was not the nurses, teachers and school dinner ladies who caused the crash, but they are the ones having their standard of living eroded to pay for it, while the wealthy Tory supporters have been rewarded with tax cuts. We understand that the welfare bill creates massive costs and, yes, there are those who play the system, but those are a minority. The majority who claim benefits do so because they have to, because they are on a minimum wage, not a living wage. This vindictive Welfare Reform Act targets all benefit claimants disproportionately which will cause millions of people financial hardship, poverty and possible homelessness. This Act is a blatant and shameless attack on the working class of this country and it is the biggest change in our welfare system for 60 years. Whilst the richest get a top-rate tax cut, the poorest are being pushed deeper and deeper in dept.

Iain Duncan Smith said that Universal Credit would be a move away from worklessness. How will this happen when we have seen wholesale job losses in the public sector? Where are those jobs, Iain? Universal Credit replaces a whole raft of key working-age benefits and tax benefits and will present

significant financial challenges for some claimants. Not only are some benefits being paid monthly, but they will be monthly in arrears, thereby causing people more hardship. To save money, some benefits will have to be applied for on-line. Can everyone use a computer? Does everyone have internet access? I think not. Is this another way of reducing the welfare bill by making it impossible for thousands of people to make a claim.

The bedroom tax. Housing Benefit will reduce by 14% for one spare room and 25% for two spare rooms, which could be about £22 a week. People who have lived in their homes for years will either have to move or pay this shortfall themselves. Remember, there are no homes for people to move to. We are supposedly living in a civilised society. This appalling piece of legislation has been prepared by those who have never experienced poverty or hardship, and probably the only time they have had shared sleeping arrangements was in their dorm in their public school. This cannot be called reform. The major definition of the word means improvement, something positive. I cannot see anything positive about welfare reform for those affected by it. The only winners apart from the Government and the payday loan sharks, who are licking their lips with glee at all the people they will rip off and push further and further into debt. This is an attack on the most vulnerable people in society. We are going back to the Poor Law and the workhouse days, a situation devised by those who have no concept of how the ordinary people in this country live or, should I say, try to exist. These working people are those who are now joining the queues at food banks and having meals in Salvation Army soup kitchens, because this Government doesn't care. Please support this and other moves to get this legislation repealed and lobby the Labour Party to make this the first thing they do when they come back to power. Let us not say "Farewell to the Welfare State". Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Jeff. Well done. Secunder?

BRO. J. OSBORNE (London): I second Composite 21 – Welfare Reform. Since coming to power, the Coalition Government have, as Owen Jones told us on Monday, been engaged in turning the population against each other, those in council houses against those on the waiting lists, the working poor against the none-working poor, the white working-class people against the immigrant family that lives round the corner. But this demonization of people on benefits and the pitting of one group of people against another must be challenged. We must challenge the notion that the most vulnerable members of our society are scroungers. We must challenge the notion that those who rely on benefits are living on the backs of others because they are old or disabled, or because they have been made unemployed or fallen on hard times, through no fault of their own. The mark of our civilised society is one that looks after its poor and vulnerable. The mark of a civilised society is not one of politicians lining up on TV to demonise them. We are moving back to a society that turns its back on the vulnerable. The GMB does not share this vision. Our vision is of a society that protects and looks after the poor and its vulnerable. Demonising them is not the solution. A different economic vision is what we need. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie.

SIS. V. DAVISON (Northern): Congress, I am speaking on Composite Motion 21 – Welfare Reform. This Coalition Government and its views on the big society are not only a cover up for the worst public spending cuts in nearly a century, but are in themselves a big con. To bring in a foreign company to do public sector work says it all. Employing ATOS to cause misery to people on benefits is a disgrace. The pressure that ATOS has put on claimants has amounted to bullying, intimidation and the tactics of a police state. ATOS will not pay on the profits that it gets from the UK because it doesn't have a stake here. It only wants to take money off the British taxpayer, money that this Coalition Government is giving them. It is an absolutely disgrace. The Tories are making bogus claims about the welfare budget. The welfare budget in the UK is going up if you include health spending but the percentage spend on benefits has remained static. Meanwhile, the millionaires in

the Cabinet live in a different universe to the rest of society. Just like ATOS, they don't make anything, they don't do anything and they don't create wealth.

The Government have a view on benefits that is far from reality. It's the modern day version of the deserving and undeserving poor. This approach has to stop. Labour should signal that it will do so, and then the Act will be amended by them when in Government. They should re-double their efforts in national campaigning to attack this Coalition Government at every turn. Privatising welfare benefits is the road to disaster. Let's make the Coalition at national and local level pay for giving public money to parasites. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Composite 22.

## **THE BENEFIT CAP COMPOSITE 22**

### **C22 Covering Motions:**

- 297. OPPOSING BENEFIT CAPS (*London Region*)
- 298. SOCIAL (*Birmingham & West Midlands Region*)
- 299. REVERSE THE BENEFIT CAP (*Midland and East Coast Region*)

### **THE BENEFIT CAP**

This Congress is appalled at the decision imposed by this current Con/Dem Government to cap certain benefits at 1% increases for the next 3 years which not only affects the most vulnerable in society but also hard working families.

Congress congratulates the Labour Party in opposing the Coalition Government's cynical and miserly 1% cap on benefits and the dishonest manner in which it was presented.

Congress also compares the 1% benefit cap to the tax relief for those earning £100,000 plus and the way in which the banks have been exonerated from the economic woes they created.

Nor should we forget that none of these policies could be enacted without the active Parliamentary support of the Lib Dems

This Congress instructs the CEC to:

- mount a campaign to link benefits back to the cost of living rises on a yearly basis, to protect working people who receive tax credits and child benefit.
- lobby MP's for change to the current decision made in order to return rises based on the Retail Price Index (RPI).

(*Carried*)

BRO. G. GOLDSMITH (Birmingham & West Midlands): President and Congress, benefits for the hardworking families will, in real terms, over the next three years be reduced by at least 4% or, maybe, 5%. These cuts in family income will make some of our workers the hardest hit by the austerity measures with many having to cut back on basic essentials.

The big society. The Government are full of sound bites, rhetoric and spin, which mask the cruel, cold cuts which we have had to endure as part of the big society. It has been estimated that two-and-a-half million claimants will lose out by an average of £215 per year, and that is those who are unemployed in the first place. Alarming, over seven million working households will be adversely

affected. “Your Housing Benefit is being slashed.” “Why?” “Your house is too big for you.” Working benefits and tax credits increased by 1% below the cost of living. The taxation threshold is being reduced so that another third-of-a-million will qualify for the 40% rate and suffer more taxation costs, while the multinationals are allowed to dodge paying their share of the tax burden.

The over 65s have been battered again by the freeze on the so-called “Granny tax”. Child Benefit has been frozen for a third year at £20.30 per week for the first child and £13.40 for each additional sibling. We don’t all sit around to watch day-time TV. We are proud workers whose only crime is to work for an employer who doesn’t pay us enough so we fall into the benefit trap. All benefits will be capped, so not only are the low-income households going to lose over £700 per year in contrast to the richest 10% of households which stand to lose less than £100 per year.

The TUC is openly opposed to the caps, saying that this is a fresh raid on welfare and will not help a single person back into work. It will just leave them a whole lot poorer and struggling to pay the bills. A failing economic policy is not lifting us out of debt. We are being increasingly screwed into the ground when their focus should be on growth and stimulation of the economy. A return to the Retail Price Index linked to benefits would at least allow some families to keep their heads above water. Reality shows that the vast majority of claimants are not on the scrounge, do not knock the system and would much rather work and earn their money. Many families don’t even claim what is due to them because they don’t want to be labelled as “scroungers”. The use of the Consumer Price Index has deliberately downgraded benefits which, in turn, has driven up child poverty for thousands. It has been estimated to reach at least 0.8 million by 2020.

Sadder even than the cuts themselves are those who believe the spin. Large numbers have swallowed the bullshit spread by the Tory press and are going along with it. So, Congress, let us show our opposition to these nasty, under-handed cuts to the living standards of families who can least afford them. True, there are some who do milk the system and play the game, but that would be a case which would be investigated for possible fraud, but it is not an excuse to batter the genuine claimants who can least afford to do without. I move. Let’s stop the benefits capping now. (*Applause*)

BRO. J. CLARKE (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I second Composite 22. We all know that this is no more than another Tory attack on working and vulnerable people. After their mates in the City cock it all up we, at the bottom, must pay for their greed, but I do know this. I say this with passion. I feel nothing but anger when I see family and friends struggling now. Every day the cost of living increases, let alone in three years time with this benefit cap on top. It is not right or just in a society like today. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

BRO. V. WEST (London): Congress, I support Composite 22, and opposing the benefit cap. When Iain Duncan Smith was leader of the Conservative Party, he described himself as the “quiet man”. Well, now that he is Work & Pensions Secretary I would remind him of Clement Attlee’s sound advice: “A period of silence on your part would be very welcome”, or, in other words, “Shut the fuck up!” (*Applause*)

At a time when the most vulnerable in society are relying on food banks, at a time when we see people at the bottom of the economic pyramid having to make decisions, such as “Do I eat or do I heat?”, when families have to make daily decisions about whether the kids eat and mum and dad go hungry, what does IDS do? He imposes a well-below inflation cap of 1% on benefit claimants. It is difficult enough for my members in local government who have not had a pay rise for three years, but how much more difficult is it for somebody on Jobseeker’s Allowance and Housing Benefit to cope with a 1% cap imposed on their benefit when, at the same time, their bills are for ever rising? By imposing a benefit cap of 1%, the Tories show themselves in their true colours. As I said earlier this morning, “Beware of the nasty Party. It’s back.” Please support Composite 22.



THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Vaughan. I ask for the mover of Motion 301.

## **BENEFITS CUTS MOTION 301**

### **301. BENEFITS CUTS**

This Congress, whilst acknowledging the excellent work carried out by GMB on this subject to date, is mindful that cuts in benefits impact disproportionately on women, on disabled and other minority groups and urge our union to continue campaigning against the cuts including within our Labour MPs and Councillors.

NORTH EAST AMBULANCE BRANCH  
*Northern Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. P. SAWDON (Northern): Congress, I move Motion 301 – Benefits Cuts. The scale of cuts to the benefits since the General Election nearly three years ago is a continuous scandal. All the groups that our equality agenda covers are being massively affected. It is clear what the strategy of the Tory and Lib-Dem Coalition is, and it is a cynical strategy. It puts individuals against individuals, it puts groups in need against others and it puts community against community. It is a cynical race to the bottom, all in the name of the Coalition Government's defective reduction programme.

The use of ATOS, which was shockingly brought in by the last Government, to decide who is fit for work, is a disgrace. Let's be perfectly clear. The actions of ATOS in the communities across the country are causing people who are in need to feel persecuted and vulnerable. Some have even taken their own lives, such is the stress caused by their benefits being cut.

Congress, the cuts are only about 30% are the ones that the Tories and Lib-Dems have announced. The Universal Credit scheme is Iain Duncan Smith's latest scheme which will cause women, disabled and other minority groups to feel even more unequal in society. What we need is to get rid of ATOS. We need benefits being reversed. Also we need Ed Miliband and the Labour Party to quite simply say that they will repeal these cuts. If they are asked how to pay for them, my message is clear. Let's get a better equality in society. Congress, let Starbucks, Amazon and all the others who are ripping off you and me pay for it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

SIS. L. SERRECHIA (Northern): Congress, I am seconding Motion 301, Benefits Cuts. Government cuts are going to affect every person in society that is in need of our help and support. We see every day the disabled, the vulnerable, the groups in society most in need, facing the prospect of cuts in their basic income level that no civilised society should ever contemplate, yet this millionaires' Cabinet, this Cabinet that gives tax cuts to the rich and lets their friends in the City and in the tax havens off Scot free, feels nothing for the poor and the needy. What we need, Congress, as the motion says, is to re-double our efforts in the branches, among our members, in the communities and across the country to show why these scandalous cuts matters to us. We need the Labour Party to be much more vocal in scrapping these cuts. We don't want Labour to tell us that the *Daily Mail* readers and *Sky News* viewers are the support of the middle England that we need to get into power. To hell with that.

We need to have people in the Shadow Cabinet and in the PLP to say, "Look, if you don't pay your fair share and seek to put your money offshore, and if you evade or avoid the tax, it is now your turn to cough up." Then we can use that money, and much more besides to stop these cuts and start reversing the gaps between the rich and poor which have widened during the past 30 years. That is what we need to do, Congress. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I call Motion 302.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
MOTION 302**

**302. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

This Congress opposes this government's proposal to pay future benefits to only one individual per household.

This will undoubtedly lead to an increase in domestic violence which is already at unacceptable levels and spiralling out of control.

We call on the CEC to campaign for an immediate change to this practice and ensure benefit payments are made only to the claimant.

KIRKLEES BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. S. BOOTH (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 302 – Domestic Violence. President, the Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent in March 2012. The current Government believe that these reforms are motivated by an aspiration for people to become socially mobile and to promote work as the most sustainable route out of poverty. I don't know about you guys, but I'm reluctant to believe anything that this current Government say.

One area of reform yet to be introduced could prove devastating. Universal Credit abolishes several means-tested benefits and claimants will be gradually transferred across with an expectation that in 2017 everyone will be in receipt of this new benefit. The concern I have, having been a child myself trapped in a household of domestic violence, and the concern of other groups, such as Women's Aid and Women's Budget Group, are relating to the fact that Universal Credit will be paid to a single family member as opposed to benefits being split between couples as at present.

One in four women and one in six men will experience domestic violence during their lifetime. Every minute of the day police in the UK receive a report of domestic violence. Some of these victims will have the means to escape. They have friends and family to stay with or enough money. The Government expects each household to choose who will be the recipient of this benefit. Well, I ask the Government to think of those individuals trapped in violent relationships who have very little choice over anything, never mind any financial control. For those individuals, this situation will allow abusive partners to trap people in a financial straightjacket from which there is little chance of escape.

Congress, please support my motion in asking the GMB to press the Government to change this practice and ensure that benefit payments are only made to the claimant. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stacey. Secunder?

SIS. A. BURLEY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second Motion 302 on Domestic Violence. Good morning, delegates and visitors. This Government's proposal to pay Universal Credit to only one individual in a household may lead to more domestic violence cases. It is more likely that the perpetrator of domestic violence will receive the benefit, hence leaving those abused with no options and unable to make a clear judgment on how to move on from their current situation. This can give the perpetrator full control of the abused, in respect of mental, physical, emotional, financial and verbal abuse. For those on the receiving end of this abusive situation, this is the most

isolated, darkest and loneliest time of their lives. Just pure fear can result in an abused partner feeling that their only option is suicide.

As I myself have been a victim of domestic violence in the past, although I don't see myself as a victim any more, I am a survivor of this abuse. *(Applause)* Thank you. The thought of not being able to flee to a safe place, ie, a women's refuge, due to the changes that this Government propose, with the Housing Benefit cap and the Universal Credit, is just unimaginable.

Fact: one incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute, whether the perpetrator be male or female. We urge the GMB to campaign for an immediate change to this proposal and to ensure that benefits are made to the individual claimant. Domestic violence is already at unacceptable levels across the UK. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Amanda. Composite 23.

## **BEDROOM TAX COMPOSITE 23**

### **C23 Covering Motions:**

- 303. THE BEDROOM TAX *(Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region)*
- 306. BEDROOM TAX *(Northern Region)*

## **BEDROOM TAX**

This Congress Deplores the Coalition Government's bedroom tax and its imposing right wing Tory Victorian values on twenty first century Britain.

This Congress notes:

1. The Government has enacted legislation called the Welfare Reform Act ("the Act") due to come into force in April 2013.
2. The Act reduces housing benefit by between 14% and 25% for those in social housing (council housing or housing association housing) if they are deemed to be 'under occupying'.
3. 'Under occupying' includes:
  - 3.1 Having one more room for each single person or couple (even if the 'extra' room is a box room or for storing disability equipment).
  - 3.2 Having more than one room for two children under 10 of a different gender.
  - 3.3 Having more than one room for two children under 16 of the same gender.
  - 3.4 Having a room for a foster child.
4. Across the country there are already 1 million people on council waiting lists for one bedroom properties. In Leeds 20,000 council homes have been lost in the last 15 years.
5. The Welfare Minister, Lord Freud, owns a London Home worth an estimated £1.9million but pays only an estimated three times as much council tax as a person living in a bedsit.
6. The Government refused to implement a tax on very high value residential property or re-assess council tax on these mansions.
7. Official estimates are that 95,000 families will be forced into poverty due to the bedroom tax.
8. The Hooper family (reported in The Mirror 27 January 2013) have five children and live in a four-bedroom Council house in Hull. Their disabled daughter has her own room – built as an extension, as her wheelchair doesn't fit in the box room. The Hooper family will lose £20 per week due to the bedroom tax as not all children are sharing a room.

This Congress believes:

9. That under occupancy of Council housing is not the problem, the lack of Council housing being built is the real problem that needs addressing.
10. Even where a resident would prefer to down-size, there are no properties to move into.
11. That solution to a lack of social housing is not to punish those who live in social housing but to build more council homes.

This Congress resolves:

12. To support any GMB members affected by this policy who raise it with the union.
13. To publicise the unfair impact of this law and support campaigns for it to be abolished.
14. To support any network of those tenants effected.
15. To ask local Councils to take any practical measures to mitigate or avoid the impact of this legislation i.e. by not enforcing arrears and not evicting tenants where the eviction is caused by this benefit change.
16. To ask that GMB sponsored Councillors act in a manner consistent with this motion.

Congress calls for this “telling people how to run their lives” tax to be scrapped and for the Labour Party to signal that it will indeed scrap this ridiculous and pernicious tax, should it be returned to power in 2015.

*(Carried)*

BRO. M. HINCHLIFEE (Yorkshire North Derbyshire): I am moving Composite 23 – Bedroom Tax. Before I start, I would like to clear up a little issue from yesterday. For all of those boys and girls sat on the edge of their seats wondering what happened to the lion and the mouse. The big roaring lion got increasingly pissed off with the patronising little shit of a mouse always being right so he ate him. The end. *(Applause)*

In every good debate, there are always two points of view. Therefore, I would like Congress to reflect, just for a few moments, on all the good things that Margaret Thatcher did when she was on this planet. That’s fine, because I can’t think of anything, either. *(Applause)* When I first heard about the Bedroom Tax, I was half listening to BBC Five Live News. There are other news outlets available. I thought for a minute that Con-Doms were talking about introducing a tax for copulating couples. “Have they lost their marbles?”, I hear you cry. Maybe, but the facts behind the bedroom tax are even more bizarre. The Act came into force on April 2013. The percentage reduction is between 14% - 25% in your Housing Benefit if you come under the banner of “under occupying”. This, in simple terms, means that your house is too big for you and the state has now decided to tax you for the privilege of living this extravagant lifestyle.

The smarter ones amongst you will have worked out that there is a way out of this Con-Dom poverty trap, and that’s to downsize. This has already been covered up by the Con-Doms as there is little or no social-housing building programme and the waiting list across the country for one-bedroom properties now stands at over one million. Official estimates are that 100,000 families will be forced into the poverty trap. This can be borne out by a 338% increase in emergency handouts in the first month of its introduction. The Con-Doms would have us believe that everybody on any sort of benefit is covered by the Philpot phenomenon: “You are all lazy benefit scroungers, you should get yourselves a job and stop sponging off the rest of us”, whereas in the real world, between January 2010 and 2012 a massive 93% of new Housing Benefit claimants had at least one adult in employment in their household.

The Con-Dom plan, if indeed they have one, is to tax the poor people of Britain into extinction, and as we have already seen a suicide resulting from the implementation of this Act, this signals a downward spiral that we need to exit as soon as possible. The solution to this problem is quite

straightforward. We need to build more council houses to suit the needs of the current and future population of Britain. This would also boost the economy and the prospects of young people who at present can see no future. We also need to introduce a mansion tax on the fat cats of this country to redress the current imbalance and to remind them where they are today because of the hardworking people in this country.

In conclusion, the bedroom tax is a panic measure from a Con-Dom Government which is seen out of control, and the only solution they can come up with is to tax the poor so that they and their friends can maintain their wealth and lifestyle. This is a tax born out of middle-aged Britain and we should consign it to the history books where it belongs.

Yvette Cooper addressed a meeting in Sheffield not long ago and she told us, “We will build 100,000 homes.” Notice, not “council” or “social” housing. I say that Yvette is wrong. Labour needs to build a million homes and call them “council houses”. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Northern Region, follow that.

BRO. A. WALKER (Northern): Congress, I second Composite 23 on the Bedroom Tax. The Coalition Government’s Bedroom Tax is nothing more than another example of the Tory toffs telling the people how to run their lives. It is a return to a Victorian Britain. In the Northern Region we have many examples of people who are being told to take in lodgers, move house or lose their Housing Benefit. The Bedroom Tax means that having one extra room can cost 15% of your Housing Benefit, and 25% for two bedrooms. This Housing Benefit reduction is hitting separate parents who share the care of their children and are allocated an extra bedroom to reflect this, couples recovering from illness or operations now need medical proof of needing the extra bedroom, carers with foster children are not counted as part of their household, parents whose children who visit but who are not living in the family home, families with disabled children and disabled people living in adopted or specially designed properties. The system is estimated to have hit 660,000 working-aged social tenants in the social housing sector. The majority of these people have only one extra bedroom.

This Government of millionaires has imposed a benefit tax on the people with one spare bedroom, which results in an extra rent of £728 a year. This bedroom tax punishes the disabled, single parents, carers, terminally ill and soldiers serving on the frontline, and foster parents with more than one foster child. It needs to be scrapped. We need the Labour Party to stand up and be counted, and that means every member of the Shadow Cabinet and every MP. The Government needs to go, but we will only get Labour into power if they pledge to repeal this legislation and to scrap this tax. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Motion 304.

## **HOUSING/HOUSING BENEFIT MOTION 304**

### **304. HOUSING/HOUSING BENEFITS**

This Congress says to the Government Ministers if you have empty bedrooms would you seek to take a lodger into your home as is being imposed onto residents in Council/Association Housing from April 2013?

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Withdrawn)*

SIS. J. SMITH (London): Congress, I move Motion 304. This motion started off by asking “Would Government Ministers take a lodger in their house?” This is referring to Cameron and his cronies.

No, I don't think they would. Is it safe for us to take lodgers in our households if we have got a spare bedroom? No, it isn't. We do not know who we are taking in and look at the times, even if it is a family member, when family members have been murdered or assaulted in their own home. It is not safe.

In March a report was produced in which Richard Howitt, our MEP, was talking about the bedroom tax. A lady told him how she left an abusive partner and he is now encouraged to rent out her room to a lodger. She is very worried that she will put her son at risk again. That is coming out of a family relationship. It is not right that we put people in this situation. As the previous speaker said, are the different rates and tiers within the bedrooms correct? Within the Flagship Housing Group in our area, their newsletter broke down their criteria. They also went out and spoke to their tenants and advised that if they didn't do as they wanted, they've got to take in a lodger. But under the criteria of two children under 10, boys and girls are expected to share a room is not right either. The point is that in this day and age our children, at the age of 10 and under, even from five, are now more matured and are conscious of their bodies. They are different and growing up faster than we did in our days. Please support the motions.

I don't know if you are aware, because I wasn't until I read *this*, but in imposing this rule, the Government have given local authorities permission to make discretionary housing payments, known as DHP. It says: "These are short-term payments designed to help people get over a temporary financial problem." These people don't want a temporary financial problem. They don't want lodgers in their houses and it is not right that children should be forced to share bedrooms. Please support.

Finally, I can say that London Region is withdrawing Motion 304 in favour of Motion 303. I ask you to take the points that I have made into consideration. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I now go to Motion 305.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING MOTION 305**

### **305. PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING**

This Congress Calls for the Labour Party to repudiate the announcement by Government Ministers and policy wonks that the elderly should leave their family homes so that families can find somewhere to live.

Congress believes that the way to tackle housing shortages is to build more public housing and provide more affordable housing, not make elderly and vulnerable people leave a home that may have been a family home and haven for decades and Congress calls on the Bedroom Tax to be abolished.

MIDDLESBROUGH 5 BRANCH  
*Northern Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. J. WINTER (Northern): Congress, I move Motion 305 on Public Sector Housing. This motion is very clear. Tory right-wing academics and the policy wonks who have been peddling this claptrap about the elderly being moved out of their family homes should get back to the world which is far removed from ours. This is yet another initiative from the lunatic fringe of the Tory Party. These are free-market supporters who believe that the rich should get richer. They believe that the market should be allowed to have its way, that the bankers and their likes are wealth creators and that a low-wage economy is a recipe for success.

Congress, this is not just about the elderly, but it is about the unemployed and the disabled who are being affected as well. If this lot gets back into power, then God help us all. The Bedroom Tax will see a lot more suicides. Mark my words. How can we move people from far bigger homes to smaller ones when we don't have the spare homes we need? Congress, the answer to the housing shortage is by building more council houses and more affordable houses, not clearing out our local neighbourhoods and herding them into places they clearly do not wish to go to.

However, I am amazed that the Labour politicians have not jumped on this and started local campaigns to make the grey vote aware of what is happening, where the lunatic right-wing fringe is straining at the leash to set about every part of our way of living, yet Labour housing people seem to be doing nothing to unmask these Tories for what they are. We need more houses built. Congress, just like in the 1930s, it was when we were building homes that the economy started to grow out of a slump. That's what we need and we need to unleash our campaigns in the terms of the motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Seconder?

SIS. E. WALLER (Northern): Congress, I second Motion 305. This Coalition Government have created this current housing problem by their do-nothing approaches over the past three years. We need to get out of this Tory and Lib-Dem slump, a slump made in Downing Street, a slump made by the millionaires' club that call themselves "The Cabinet". It is a basic human right to stay in your home, a home filled with love and memories where you want to spend your most happiest time.

We need to reverse this Tory-led Coalition policy of cutting employment, cutting taxes for the rich, cutting welfare and raising the public debt. We need more homes built that people can rent or buy. We need construction workers to be employed to build. We need banks to lend and we need Government to relax the pressures on local councils so that they can borrow to invest in the social fabric of our communities. That way, Congress, we will increase employment, increase the tax coffers, reduce welfare spending and reduce the deficit. We need Labour to signal its total opposition to these proposals and to support a radical public-sector house building programme. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Motion 307.

## **BENEFITS ONLINE MOTION 307**

### **307. BENEFITS ONLINE**

This Congress totally opposes this government's move to make it compulsory for all benefits to have to be claimed 'online' in future.

8 million people in the UK currently have no computer access and in addition to that, many are simply not able to do what will be required to make a claim.

That, we suggest, is the government's aim!

Congress calls upon the CEC to lobby all MP's to get this changed immediately and further, to lobby for a firm commitment from the Labour Party to reverse this position if it is still practice when they get elected.

KIRKLEES BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. J. EARLY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 307 – Benefits Online. President, according to UK Online, more than eight million people currently have no computer access and over four million of these people claim state benefit. Despite this, the Government are making it compulsory for people to claim benefits online. If the Con-Dems get their way “no Broadband” will mean “no benefits”. At a time when every aspect of our day-to-day lives is carried out online, it is easy to forget what life was like without the internet, and the Government have done exactly that. Their digital strategy forgets the fact that many people simply haven’t got the required skills or access to computers. They also forget the fact that over a third have a disability or mental health issues, and they conveniently forget that many thousands of people will be unable to make claims in the future, but that is just what this Con-Dem Government want.

In Scotland the short-sighted policy already has had an impact. Citizens Advice has revealed that thousands of job seekers are being penalised by Jobcentres for not applying for jobs online. That means the benefits are stopped. If this policy is implement in the rest of the UK, many more will miss out on the benefits that they are entitled to. We believe that people who are entitled to benefits should be able to access them in a way which matches their needs, resources and capabilities and, instead of handing out penalties, Jobcentres should be there to help people back to work.

The use of the internet has many positives, but the Government’s digital strategy is flawed. They should aim to encourage and support society’s most vulnerable people, not find new ways to punish them. Let us call upon the CEC to lobby all MPs to get this divisive strategy changed immediately and make claiming benefits online an option, not a pre-requisite. Furthermore, we should lobby for a firm commitment from the Labour Party to reverse its position if it is still practised when they get elected. Insisting on people applying for benefits online is just another way for that Tory hatchetman, Iain Duncan Smith, to force through his welfare cuts by the backdoor. He said he doesn’t want to get bogged down in defending the nitty-gritty details of how his new benefit system works. That is because he knows it is flawed, not fit for purpose but he doesn’t give a damn that it’s going to cause financial hardship and suffering to thousands of families.

Congress, let’s be very clear. This is an attack on the poor and vulnerable, which is part and parcel of this Conservative agenda to dismantle our welfare state. Thank you.

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

SIS. R. KNOWLES (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second Motion 307, Benefits Online. President, say what you want about the Tories, but it is clear that they used their time in opposition well. They have a plan and they are implementing it with breathtaking, ruthless efficiency, ready as they were with wave after wave of attacks on working people and the most vulnerable in society. They put forward a seemingly sensible proposal, masking a deliberate attempt to put further obstacles in the way of those who rely on them. A high proportion of those in need of benefits, approximately eight million, are simply not online, can’t cope with a computer or are simply frightened of them. But what the Tories know is that they are off the radar and their collective voices are rarely heard in society. This apparently administrative move is in fact driven by an ideology which wants to remove any safety net for those who badly need one.

Let’s see how long it is before having moved benefits online we saw more savage job cuts amongst civil servants in the DWP, a double-whammy for the Tories. Colleagues, we are the voice of the vulnerable in work and out of it. Please support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?



SIS. T. CHANA (London): Congress, I am speaking in support of Motion 302 – Domestic Violence. Domestic abuse is threatening behaviour, violence, psychologically, physically, sexually, emotionally and financially.

The proposals have placed the victims of domestic abuse at even more risk of being killed by their partners, who often control them financially by taking their benefits and wages. The perpetrators of domestic abuse decide how and when money is given to them. This is further compounded by victims of abuse whose first language is not English. The benefits payment disproportionately affects women on low income by reinforcing the male, bread-winner model. This prevents victims leaving their abusive relationships because they think that they have no monetary independence. Universal credit payments should be split between partners where there is evidence of domestic abuse. Support the motion. *(Applause)*

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am speaking in support of Composite 21 on Welfare Reform. Just before I speak to that, I would say to our comrade from Yorkshire & North Derbyshire who referred to the Con-Dem Government as “Con-Doms”. Condoms are useful things. *(Laughter and Applause)* The Tories certainly aren’t useful.

On welfare reform, I want to refer to the changeover from DLA to PIP. The right-wing press have demonized disabled people, and I classify myself as one of them. I worked from 15 until I was 62. I was born visually impaired. DLA came in in 1994. Visually impaired and blind people did not receive any DLA until 2011 through the Labour Government. Under PIP every blind and visually impaired person will lose the care component because they will only receive the low-rate part of the care component, which is a disgrace. To think that there are people who have worked all their lives and paid into the system, yet here we have a Tory Government that is given tax benefits to millionaires and all the rest of it with disabled people being left to suffer. I ask you to support the motion. *(Applause)*

BRO. D. JOBSON (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I support all of the motions that have been moved. In particular, I want to speak again on the WOW Petition in relation to benefit cuts. Last night the petition reached 40,000 signatures. The target is 100,000 signatures. This is stage one of a three-stage campaign. It is not just a petition. If you could, please, see your way to signing this petition and encourage families, friends and colleagues to sign it also, you can find information on it at [www.WOWpetition.com](http://www.WOWpetition.com), [epetitionsdirect.gov.uk](http://epetitionsdirect.gov.uk) and they also have a presence on Facebook and Twitter. Thank you.

BRO. D. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): I would like to make a very quick point on Motion 307 on Benefits Online. Benefits Online is the only place now that you will be able to claim your benefits, and that is ludicrous. For those who are disabled or access to the internet is difficult, an example is our visually-impaired colleague from Scotland. There is no alternative. Those who tell you there is help are talking out of their arse. People say, “Go to the libraries.” “Oh, sorry, they’re shutting them.” “Go on a course.” As of August of this year, anybody over the age of 24 does not qualify for any adult education training. Please support. *(Applause)*

SIS. K. HOLM (Midland & East Coast): Congress and President, I would like to speak in support of Motion 302. The delegate who spoke on it earlier said that she is a survivor. I am also a survivor. *(Applause)* Thank you. Just over 11 years ago I was fighting for my life at the hands of a violent rapist. I lived with that man. He had total control over my finances. To have to beg him for money to buy the basic needs that a woman requires is demoralising and degrading. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland): Congress, I just need to clear up the confusion with the reference to “Condoms”. Basically, both dumb and dumber have said that we are safe in their hands. But when the Coalition does eventually split, it’s going to be very messy for all those in close proximity. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I thought that one worthy President was enough, but now I’ve got two. Colleagues, London Region has indicated that it will withdraw Motion 304. Does Congress agree? (*Agreed*)

*Motion 304 was WITHDRAWN*

I will now take the votes on Composite 21, Composite 22, Composite 23 and Motions 301, 302, 305 and 307. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against?

*Composite 21 was CARRIED*

*Composite 22 was CARRIED*

*Composite 23 was CARRIED*

*Motion 301 was CARRIED*

*Motion 302 was CARRIED*

*Motion 305 was CARRIED*

*Motion 307 was CARRIED*

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, can I apologise for a mistake in the voting process over Motions 224 – the Union Flag – and Motion 319 – Controls on Foreign Aid. During the debate on these motions, delegates indicated opposition to these motions and called for a separate vote. This was missed. I intend to rectify that by asking for the votes to be recorded again.

First, Motion 224. Can Congress agree that you accept my apologies? (*Agreed*) Can I now ask you to vote on Motion 224. All those in favour, please show? This was the motion on the Union Flag, which was voted on Sunday. Bob Gunn came up and opposed it. I should have taken it out of the block when we voted but we voted for the whole lot. The CEC was supporting that motion with a qualification. Does everybody understand me? (*No response*) Then I will now call for the vote. All those in favour, please show? All those against, please show?

*Motion 224 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: I move now to Motion 319, which is International Aid. The same process applies. I should have taken it out of the block and I did not. The CEC is supporting that motion with the qualification. I now put it to the vote. All in favour of Motion 319, please show? Those against?

*Motion 319 was CARRIED*

I hope that satisfies both movers. I am sorry about it. I hope I have rectified the situation now for you.

## **ADDRESS BY ALISON GARNHAM**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it gives me great pleasure to welcome – she has been sitting on the platform for quite some time listening to your debates and the language that has been used this

morning, and you know that I told you to behave – Alison Garnham to Plymouth and to our GMB Congress. Alison has been the Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) since 2010. The CPAG is the leading national charity campaigning on child poverty, welfare rights and related issues such as fair pay, childcare benefits and tax credits. The GMB have worked very closely with them. She has worked for many years as a welfare rights adviser and for a number of women's organisations and local voluntary sector organisations. She also been a senior lecture in social policy at London Metropolitan University.

Alison, it is my pleasure to ask you to address Congress.

ALISON GARNHAM (CEO, CPAG): Thank you so much for inviting me here today. I don't know how much you know about the Child Poverty Action Group, but there is a leaflet amongst all your Congress papers that explains what we do. Essentially, we do research, policy and campaigning around child poverty, but we also help families take up their benefit entitlements because we produce our benefit handbooks and guides that lots of people here will have seen.

We heard yesterday from the Institute of Fiscal Studies that the incomes of the poorest 10% in this country are going to fall by 4½% by 2016, whereas the income of the richest 10% is going to rise by 1% to £920 a week. Much of the pain that low-income families are facing is starting now, and it is going to get worse. Your motions of this morning have already reflected many of my own concerns, so I want to talk today about deficit reduction, the effect of benefit up-rating and also what is happening with welfare reform.

The background to all of this, of course, is that by 1997, as we all know, child poverty had nearly trebled. It was one of the most toxic legacies of the 1980s and 1990s. The last Government, quite rightly, made a significant impact on this. Child poverty fell by 1.1 million, and we got all-Party consensus in the Child Poverty Act. So there were significant improvements to benefits through tax credits and Child Benefit that led to those reduced child poverty rates, but there was also things like the Child Care Strategy and improvements in employment rates. For example, a quarter of the reduction in child poverty was because single parents increased their rate of work from 45% to 57%, so it was not just about throwing money at the problem, which is the way it has been caricatured today. Child wellbeing improved on 36 out of 48 international indicators. Poverty reduction took place on a scale and pace in the UK not matched by any other OECD country. We would have hit the child-poverty target in 2023 had we carried on in the way that we were going. So money worked but so did improvements in service.

When the Coalition came into power it had a pretty good amount of evidence about what worked and what did not. Although they stuck to the Child Poverty Act, of course, we know, since 2010, the Government has been prioritising deficit reduction. They have been doing this through cuts and not through tax rises. At the last Autumn Statement there were 85% cuts compared with only 15% tax rises. The cuts to social security mostly affect families with children. In the Autumn Statement document itself they have a graph where they divide the population up into 10, with the poorest tenth at the bottom and the richest tenth at the top. Four out of the five of the whole of the top half of the income distribution are seeing an improvement in their income, but the whole of the bottom half of the income distribution are seeing a fall in their income, and the poorer you get the biggest hit you are getting. This is anything but a fair deficit-reduction strategy. It is hitting the poorest the worst and hitting families with children harder than anybody else.

You might be surprised to know, for example, that children are now twice as likely to be as poor as pensioners. I don't think many people realise that in this country. We published evidence today stating that child poverty now costs us £29 billion a year. This was produced by Donald Hirsch from

Loughborough University. So when child poverty rises by 1.1 million by 2020, which is what they predict will happen, it will cost us £35 billion a year. Child poverty is really expensive.

Also poor families have to spend all of their money. They've got no choice. So if you take £22 billion out of people's pockets through benefit cuts, that's £22 billion taken straight out of the economy. It doesn't make any economic sense at all.

Then there is the problem with benefit up-rating. In 1979 Unemployment Benefit was worth something like 22% of average earnings. By 2009 it was worth half of that, 11%. Benefits have not kept up with either prices or earnings and now we've got this double lockout. We've got the Benefits Up-rating Bill, which will not increase benefits by either prices or earnings from this year. Seven out of 10 of the people affected by the Up-rating Bill are families with children. It's a 4% cut in their income. It will lead to 200,000 more children in poverty, and it will mean that Universal Credit does less well than it was intended to do. The original Government claim was that Universal Credit would lift 350,000 out of poverty, but because of the Up-rating Bill that number is down to 150,000. So the situation is getting worse even in its policies of choice.

We already know that the link to the CPI of benefits is what is driving predicted rises in child poverty. I can tell you that 60% of the cuts to date – this came out for the first time during the debate on the Up-rating Bill – fell on low-income working families. Today six out of 10 poor children live with a working parent, so they are poor because their parent is a security guard, a care worker, a cleaner or a retail worker, not because their parent is an alcoholic or a drug addict, as some would have you believe. So parents face stagnating wages, high unemployment, high inflation and more cuts to come from this year onwards. The costs of having children are rising. We know it costs families something like £150 a week to bring up a child. If you've got a couple where both parents are on the National Minimum Wage, your income actually only covers 82% of that cost. Child Benefit covers only 20% of it. We know that parents are skipping meals because having children leaves adults on benefits worse off, and for every child you have the situation gets worse. If we are looking for causes of poverty, this is clearly one of them and it is no surprise that, increasingly, families, including very often families in work, are turning to food banks in order to feed their kids.

I want to say a bit about welfare reform. It is quite strange to call it "reform" in many ways. Part of it is the result of straightforward benefit cuts. The £22 billion worth of benefit cuts that you have all been talking about today – Housing Benefit cuts, the benefit cap, cuts to Tax Credits, the link to CPI, timely limiting the Employment Support Allowance – and then there is the "reform" bit, comprising of Universal Credit, changing Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments, with a cut of 20%, localising and abolishing Council Tax Benefit, with a cut of 10% and localising the Social Fund with reduced budgets. All of these things will have a massive impact on families up and down the country. You mentioned the Bedroom Tax. We actually won a test case in court about that, which means there is now a new exemption for disabled children who can't share a room. There were lots of other judicial reviews taking place about it. Our work with the London Boroughs shows that it is already the case that families are moving to more overcrowded accommodation, or they are leaving the area, so that their kids are losing contact with their friends, families and schools. Local authorities are already buying up properties out of time to deal with the situation.

The Council Tax change is really significant, because we know that something like 2.4 million low-income families will be paying, on average, £138 more a year in Council Tax this year, so local authorities are now going to be chasing very poor families for really small amounts of money which is not only expensive but reminds us all of the days of the Poll Tax and what a catastrophe that was. So we are, kind of, back there again.

Then we have Universal Credit, which is supposed to simplify benefits, make work pay and protect the vulnerable. The early analysis of it shows that single parents and partners in couples will have

worse incentives to work and to progress in work than they did under Tax Credits. So the gains from work for a lot of people look distinctly underwhelming and not very exciting at all. Childcare costs reduce from 80% to 70%. The increase in the Personal Tax Allowance, which is much vaunted by the Coalition, won't be passed on to people on Universal Credit because it is calculated on income after tax and 65% of it will be tapered away. So the amount those families get will be tiny.

The claim made is that there will be no losers at the point of introduction, but the cuts will already have been made before Universal Credit comes in. For working families also Universal Credit introduces new rules about in-work conditionality, so just getting a job won't be enough any more. You will be expected to get a better job, earn more and do more hours before they are satisfied that you are making all the effort you need to make.

There will be a new savings rule. So people in work, unlike under Tax Credits, will have their savings taken into account. There will be no distinction between people out of work and people in work. You will also have to report changes like childcare costs on a monthly basis. So whereas Tax Credits leave people alone for a year, they are going to find themselves dealing with bureaucracy on a regular basis, even though they are in work.

Finally, the potential for IT meltdown is hanging over the whole of the Universal Credit project. The Cabinet Office has just rated Universal Credit as "amber red" in terms of the flagship policies in danger of failure. It is likely that tax credits might well be around for some time. Then there is online claiming, monthly payments and the end of payment for the main carer that you have all mentioned. These actions drive a coach and horses through the way people usually budget. There will be an urgent need for advice with Universal Credit. It is lunacy in this environment to be cutting advice provision. Unfortunately, that is what is happening on the ground.

We are also hearing about strivers and skivers who many of you have mentioned. We are being told that the problem isn't poverty but it is poor people themselves. A lot of the welfare reform we are seeing is based on assumptions that I believe to be false. We are told about a dependency culture. There is no evidence for this. I can tell you that 90% of people on Jobseeker's allowance are off benefit within six to 12 months. It assumes that poor behaviour causes poverty, but there is no evidence for this. In fact, people move readily in and out of work. The problem is that the labour market does not hold them.

Paul Gregg and his team at Bristol University tried to find the families where generations of their members had never worked. He could only find 15,000 in the whole of the UK, and most of them were young people who had never had a job yet.

We are constantly being told that alcohol and drug addiction are the main causes of poverty. Only 2.7% of children have a parent who is an alcoholic. As to drug addicts, only 0.9% have parents who are drug addicts. It is a very small driver. Also 90% of the growth in Housing Benefit claiming is from people in work. Another myth is that people on Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support don't have large families. 91% have two children or fewer, a further 5% have three children. I could go on.

All of these myths are being put about in order to justify cuts, and this is entirely unacceptable. We have also, in our language about benefits, stopped talking about social security, the thing that we all understood we had in this country, and started to talk about welfare. It makes people feel that they have nothing in common with people on benefits. They are forgetting that it could be them. When the Beveridge Report was published in 1942, it was a best seller. Everyone thought it had something to do with them. The same could not be said of the latest Universal Credit White Paper. One of the problems is that support for social security has fallen. Part of the reason for that is successive

governments talking tough about benefits in order to gain popularity. They talk about the “Something for nothing culture”. The response to this has been increasing conditionality in benefits that, again, you have been raising in your motions today. It has had the reverse effect. What it has done is to convince people more and more that the system has somehow been overtaken by people who don’t want to work and that the system is being abused, despite the fact that fraud is at an all time low. It amounts to less than 1% of expenditure, which is less than £1 billion, compared about £120 billion in unpaid taxes, for example.

We need to remind people that social security is available for everyone, like health and education. It is not just for the poorest few, which the term “welfare” would imply. So we are heading for a perfect storm. We are going to face a child-poverty crisis in this country. All the arguments about the cost of child poverty, which all the main parties signed up to in 2010, still stand but despite that fact, instead of action on child poverty, we are getting a consultation on child-poverty measurements, which obviously is the real issue in working out how many people there are.

The targets in the Child Poverty Act are being openly flouted with no political price being paid at all by the Coalition. They are in danger of doing exactly what happened in the 1980s, which caused child poverty to rise and then deny it exists or try and calculate it out of existence. I think we need to remember why all those parties signed up to the Child Poverty Act back in 2010. In the ‘80s and ‘90s when politicians and ministers said that there was no such thing as poverty in the UK, just poor life choices and dependency, that was when child poverty tripled. There were massive social consequences. We had a massive health divide, a massive education divide and a massive well-being divide for poor children, but also huge economic costs. We have just heard about what we are heading for now.

So if governing is about choosing, why are our children the last in line when it comes to the bit decisions? That is what I want to know. The Government keep telling us that they want to stop our children tomorrow from paying for our national debt, but instead they are asking low-income children to pay for it today. Putting children on the frontline of austerity is not making tough decisions. It is actually a disaster waiting to happen. So at Child Poverty Action Group it will remain our mission to campaign for action to stop this happening. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Alison. Would you, please, accept this gift on behalf of the GMB Congress.

*(The President presented Alison Garnham with a bottle of GMB Whisky and a GMB History book)*  
*(Applause)*

### **CONGRESS LOCAL GIFT: GRANTHAM FOOD BANK**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, as you know, every year regions take it in turn to nominate for their Congress local gift. This year it has been the turn of Midland & East Coast Region. They have decided, and quite rightly, that their local gift is going to be £2,000 from Midland & East Coast Region and this Congress to support the Grantham Food Bank. *(Applause)* They will be going to Grantham. This provides emergency food collected from the local community to local people in crisis and is part of the national food bank network. Where Margaret Thatcher, we are going back to show them the consequences.

I ask Colin Gunter, a delegate from Midland Region, to address Congress.

BRO. C. GUNTER (Midland & East Coast): Chair and Congress, on behalf of Grantham Community Branch and Midland & East Region, I would like to say thank you to Congress in endorsing the

Regional Gift to Grantham Food Bank. It has been in operation since 2010, it is the 84<sup>th</sup> food bank in the country of which there are 340. The project countrywide fed 340,000 people last year. It was established under the auspices of Churches Together in Grantham and District and in association with the Trussell Trust. In Grantham 2,900 families, including a thousand local children, with 29 tonnes of nutritionally-balanced food packs have been supported. Families are provided with three days of food up to three times at their point of crisis. Each time they are assessed and directed to extra support to ensure that are making quality decisions and moving in the right direction.

A project board was convened in December 2010 by volunteers with appropriate experience from a number of churches. A constitution was approved by the project board in February 2011, and an application made to the Charity Commissioners for registration mid year. The trustee board now has six members with a variety of gifts and skills to take the project forward. The constitution has, as its formal objective, the prevention or relief of poverty in Grantham and surrounding areas, in particular, but not exclusively, by providing emergency food supplies to individuals in need and/or charities or other organisations working to prevent to relieve poverty.

I would just like to take a little time to thank Brian Handry, who is a co-ordinator of the project, and Steve Sutton, a local shop steward, who helped me put this together. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we don't have the cheque to give Colin but each region will send their part of the contribution to Midland & East Coast Region, so that then, the people who are running this scheme with the region, can deliver it first hand. Thank you, Colin. We wish you well. (*Applause*)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

THE PRESIDENT: It is nearly break time. I have two announcements to make. The first is that the York Disabled Workers' Raffle raised £1,104, and this will enabled disabled people to carry on working. They would like to thank all delegates for their support. Phil Davis will be drawing the raffle at 1.45 today, but you can still contribute. Thank you all very much indeed. It is much appreciated. (*Applause*)

My final announcement is that you will see fringe events displayed on the screen. Conference is adjourned until 2 o'clock.

*Conference adjourned.*

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

*Congress re-assembled at 2.00 p.m.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, to order, please. I have just a few announcements before we go into business. Birmingham and West Midlands Region raffle for the Birmingham Children's Hospital raised £482. (*Applause*) Paul said that national will double that. (*Applause*) There is still an unclaimed prize, a pink ticket, 26-30, so could the person who has that can contact the region and claim their prize.

We now have some results on the raffle for the York disabled. The first prize is a four-seat bench, 133 yellow. The second prize has been claimed. The third prize is a deluxe bird table, 18 peach. The fourth prize is a large planter, 158 peach. The fifth prize is a bottle of champagne, 144 yellow. The sixth prize is malt whisky, 58 blue. The seventh prize is two bottles of wine, 170 green. The eighth

prize is a cutting board and rolling pin, 62 peach. The ninth prize is a triple wine goblet, 83 blue. The tenth prize is a log box, 149 peach. Thank you, delegates.

I would now like to remind all first-time delegates to Congress that you should have received a history book from your regional secretary. If any of you have not yet received it, could you please let your region know?

Could I remind all delegates to complete the delegates' questionnaire which was in your wallet? If you need another copy they are available from the Information Desk. These need to be completed and handed in at the tea and coffee area by the end of this afternoon's session to be eligible for the free prize draw to win GMB whisky and glasses.

## **CHILDREN IN CROSSFIRE**

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now see a short video to update you on the Children in Crossfire project. We are now in the third year of this three-year project. There are copies of the 2012 Annual Report available at the Information Desk.

*Video shown to Congress.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Before we begin the Finance Debate, could I please welcome Phil Clarke from our external auditors. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Could the mover and seconder of RA350 and RA358 come to the rostrum, please?

## **RULE AMENDMENTS**

### **RULE 47a RETIRED LIFE MEMBERS**

#### **RA350**

##### **Rule 47a Retired life members**

**1 When retiring permanently from paid work, people who have been members for at least five years and who want to stop paying contributions under rules 45 and 46 will pay a lump sum and become retired life members of the union. Until they pay the lump sum, members will continue to pay their contributions in line with rules 45 and 46.**

#### **RA350**

Clause No: 1, Lines 1- 4

Delete: 'At least five years'

Insert: '53 weeks in a row'

YORKSHIRE COAL STAFFS BRANCH  
*Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region*

*(Lost)*

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): You may have gathered by now that the average age of those working in the UK coal industry is fairly high, around 50, I believe, so when we recruit members into the branch often these are towards the end of their working lives and, of course, the retirement age because the work is often physical and strenuous in the coal industry is 60. So, if you approach someone and suggest that if they join the union when they retire they can remain in the union as a retired life member by paying the one-off sum, you may find they will not have five years



before they retire so would not be paying contributions for five years, which would make them ineligible according to the rule book.

We discussed this at the branch and thought it would be helpful to bring this qualifying period into line with other such periods, for example, standing as branch officials, and therefore are proposing that members should have paid in for 53 weeks in order to be eligible to pay the one-off lump sum and become retired life members of the union. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pam.

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Seconding RA350. Vice President, Congress, at a time when the pension age is increasing, at a time when some employers like B&Q actively recruit more mature workers, at a time when there is no such thing as a job for life, at a time when those who thought their working life had ended are returning to work to make ends meet, we should be looking at amending Rule 47a to reflect these changes in the labour market. This would allow many more to still be in the GMB, still be part of our brilliant community. Now, let's be honest, Congress, financial considerations are important. This amendment, by reducing the qualifying period for lifetime membership, gives us the potential to get more money in the bank from members who will not draw on union funds for legal costs or employment tribunals. It gives us more income without increasing expenditure. This union has shown in the past we can do that. It is time to do it again, to change to the realities of an ageing labour market and to benefit from it. Congress, support RA350. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The mover of RA358?

#### **RULE 57 FATAL ACCIDENT BENEFIT RA358**

##### **Rule 57 Fatal accident benefit**

**4 Where legal action has been undertaken in respect of an incident arising from which there is an entitlement to Fatal Accident Benefit under this rule, and as a result of the legal action there is an award of at least ten times the maximum level of the Fatal Accident Grant, then the Fatal Accident Benefit will not be paid, and will be recoverable if previously paid.**

#### **RA358**

Clause No: 4, Lines 1-7 (Inclusive)

Delete: That the whole of Clause 4 be deleted.

Z42 SOUTHAMPTON 1. 641 BRANCH  
*Southern Region*

*(Lost)*

BRO. A. NEWMAN (Southern): This is being opposed by the CEC and Southern Region would like to refer it back because we do take on board the arguments of the CEC and they have a point, to be honest, but we have a point as well which I am going to explain to you. What we would like to do is to take this back to the CEC for more consideration.

The rule we are referring to is the fatal accident payout of £10,000 and we want to delete the second part of the rule, which says that if someone gets a payout subsequently from the courts of more than ten times that, then they have to pay the original money back, or their beneficiaries. Now, when this was brought in, this was in the era before the unions had to turn to the courts so often and when unions used to provide a whole number of services. It is sort of self-frustrating now because if someone has a fatal accident at work it is not unusual to get £100,000 and therefore the rule is

frustrating itself by saying we are going to pay some people some money but nobody will qualify for it.

This has come from one of our manufacturing branches. There are problems with fatal workplace issues like mesothelioma. This is a very common disease in some areas, very common amongst boilermakers, in fact in Swindon, the town I come from, it is known as “the Swindon disease” because of the number of boilermakers who used to get it working with asbestos lagging the boilers of the steam engines when we used to have a rail industry there. The thing about this is that it has a long incubation period and then when people actually develop the disease they have a long degenerative period of terrible ill health before they die. Therefore, when they go to court the award they are given is not just for being killed at work as a result of working through this terrible substance, but the award also covers the period of their degenerative illness. What we are actually saying with the current way the rule is written that people who have a fatal accident at work but they have a long degenerative painful death will get an award of more than £100,000 and we will claw the money back from them, but if someone falls from a scaffold, equally tragic, but because it is a quick death then they might get less money and we would pay it for them.

We think we have a point. Very few people claim this benefit and what we would like to have some discussion about with the CEC is whether there is another way of addressing it. It may well be that if you do the actuarial calculations we are paying out £10,000 once in a blue moon, in which case let’s talk to one of the insurance companies that is always very happy to talk to the GMB and see if they will take on the risk of it, which is a very low risk. Congress, Southern Region would like to move reference back on this. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder? Formally? Thank you.

*RA358 was formally seconded.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, the CEC is opposing Rule Amendment 350. I will now take the vote. All those in favour please show? Sorry, Gordon. I now call Gordon Gibbs, CEC, to give the CEC’s report on RA350 and RA358.

BRO. G. GIBBS (CEC, Public Services): Speaking on behalf of the CEC and replying to RAs 350 and 358. RA350 seeks to shorten the qualification period for retired life members so that it is available to those who have been members for only one year. It is difficult to see any benefit from this change. Retired life membership is an option available to longstanding members who have retired from work and wish to stay in touch with the GMB. It is not intended as a recruitment tool. If this rule change was accepted, a GMB member could join for one year on grade 2 and then pay the lump sum payment required for retired life membership; the total cost, £105. There would be an eventual entitlement to funeral benefit which currently stands at £300 but the sums just do not add up. The union needs to grow by attracting young people who can be supported by our retired members.

RA358 seeks to remove the union’s right to withhold fatal accident benefit, if, as a result of a legal action, there had been an award of more than ten times the maximum benefit. That could mean an award of over £100,000 for an occupational fatal accident or £50,000 for a non-occupational fatal accident. Since the rule was introduced the CEC has never had to use it, withhold it, or recover the benefit. The CEC believes it is fair that the union benefits should not be used to top up substantial settlements. The existing rule works well and available funds should be used for those most in need. Congress, please oppose RA350 and RA358. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gordon. Congress will now go for the vote. Sorry, Pam.

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire) exercised her right of reply to RA350. She said: I wish we had young people to recruit into the coal industry. Unfortunately, we do not. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does the mover of RA358 want a right of reply because at this moment we cannot change the stance of oppose? No? Reference back, sorry, you cannot change it now just at the last minute but we will take it back to the Finance and we will look at it. Do you want the right to reply because our stance will still be to oppose? No? Okay, thanks for that. We will look at it.

So, RA350, the CEC is opposing this motion. All those in favour please show? All those against? That fell. Thank you. RA358, the CEC is opposing this rule amendment as well. All those in favour please show? All those against? That fell.

*RA350 was LOST.*

*RA358 was LOST.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, I would like to take items 2, 3, and 4 together. I intend to hear all the movers and seconders of the motions; then the General Secretary will give the CEC position as part of his speech on the CEC Finance Report. Can I now call motions 40, 52, 59, and 61 to come to the rostrum, please?

## **UNION ORGANISATION: FINANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

### **FINANCES**

#### **MOTION 40**

#### **40. FINANCES**

This motion calls on Congress to support a review of the GMB financial investments on ethical grounds. Last year at Congress, Paul Kenny announced that the GMB would be selling their shares in Carillion due to the dispute in Swindon. However, we feel that an overall review is necessary so that we aren't supporting unethical and unscrupulous employers and this review needs to be done on a regular basis.

M27 LB MERTON BRANCH  
*Southern Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. K. ABU-BAKIR (Southern): Colleagues, last year Paul Kenny stood on the rostrum and said that the way Carillion had acted he was going to withdraw the GMB money out of the company because they were unscrupulous. So this motion is not condemning any particular investment but just asking for an ethical review and for this to be reported back to us. If we are investing in particular companies to have leverage, then this will be understood within the review. However, if that is the case, can we also have an explanation about that? Currently, we are investing in some companies who are not paying their taxes and in another company that has been fined for unscrupulous practices. We must review this. Please take a moment to have a look at the finances on page 18. Thank you. I hope you will support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kathy. Secunder?

BRO. D. SUCKLING (Southern): Seconding motion 40. We need regular reviews of the investments by GMB. We need to make sure that we are not financially supporting groups that are opposed to our trade union or moral beliefs. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Doug. Mover of motion 52?

## **CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR UNEMPLOYED MEMBERS**

### **MOTION 52**

#### **52. CONTRIBUTION RATE FOR UNEMPLOYED MEMBERS**

This Congress notes the increasing need to win over public support to be successful in our campaigns in defence of jobs, pensions and services. We also note the need to work with the wider community on issues, resulting from welfare reform, which are affecting our members.

Our branch prides itself on the work it carries out in our area winning the Regional Branch Community Campaign of the Year Award two years running.

We note the innovative work being carried out by other trade unions in relation to community membership. The branch recognises the prohibitive rate of contributions for those out of work.

We, therefore, instruct the GMB to investigate community membership and organisation for the benefit of the union, its campaigns and our communities.

CHESTERFIELD NO. 1 BRANCH  
*Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. I. WALTERS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): This motion is knocking at an open door. I am sure the people I work and live with on my estate in South Leeds have more commonsense in their little fingers than Cameron and his gang put together. People that I talk about are young parents that serve on school governor bodies and I encourage all GMB members to get on these governing bodies through the Labour Party, a parent governor, a community governor, so you can give support not just to kids but to teaching assistants and all other low paid workers in education. We also have a local tenant management organisation in Belle Isle and I will just give you two examples. Paragraph 3 explains why we need this motion. I have gone wrong — I should have said that about teaching assistants. We have a thriving local tenant management organisation who work hard and most of the people that do these jobs are unemployed, and if we get them in they talk to tenants on a daily basis as well. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder?

SIS. J. EARLY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Vice President, Congress, I work at a chemical plant in our region and like many thousands in this country we are in redundancy consultation with our employer. At the end of it, a few hundred of us will have lost our jobs and once unemployed it is likely many members will lose touch with the union, cease to be active, or just leave all together. Community membership is a way to organise support and give a voice to the many millions of unemployed and their families, and to continue and retain our membership. Congress, I second. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Johanna. The mover of motion 59?

## **TAX FREE TRADE UNION CONTRIBUTIONS**

### **MOTION 59**

#### **59. TAX FREE TRADE UNION CONTRIBUTIONS**

This Congress calls for the Union to campaign for union membership fees to be tax deductible.

This is an equality issue as professionals can have their subscription fees deducted against their tax. Union membership fees are exclusively for the purpose of work and ensure that the workplace is a safer place to work and better paid than non-unionised workplaces.

We submit that to restrict such tax allowances to the professional classes is discriminatory against working class employees and workers. We ask the Union to vigorously campaign and use its influence in the Labour Party to make this happen after the next General Election when we, hopefully, get a Labour Government.

NORFOLK PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH  
London Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. V. THOMAS (London): President, Congress, this Congress calls for the union to campaign for union fees to be tax deductible. This is an equality issue as professionals can have their subscription fees deducted against their tax. Union membership fees are exclusively for the purpose of work ensuring that the workplace is a safer place to work and better paid than non-unionised workplaces. We submit that to restrict such tax allowances to the professional classes is discriminatory against working class employees and workers. We ask the union to vigorously campaign and use its influence in the Labour Party to make this happen after the next general election when we hopefully get a Labour government. Tax laws are complex but this motion is based on the basic principle of equal treatment. The website for HMRC has an endless list of the many professional bodies where it is possible to claim membership fees against tax. The present state of play is preferential in favour of membership of professional bodies. We therefore are asking for equal treatment in respect of membership of trade unions. This country is rooted in a class structure that still rules our society today, a legacy of inequality passed down through the ages. This motion seeks to address one of those inequalities. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Viv. Secunder?

SIS. M. BOWMAN (London): The current economic climate is making life very tough for working people. As an example, pay freeze, another one is high cost of living, and redundancies, and high unemployment. This Government is turning the clock back regarding our working rights. People need to be able to turn to someone when it seems there is no hope. That is where the GMB comes in. Forget the living wage because without the unions we would not even have had a minimum wage. This union needs members and members pay contributions, and unfair tax laws need to change so that our union fees should be tax free. Let's fight for tax-free fees to help wherever we can. Congress, I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mavis. The mover of motion 61?

**UNION ORGANISATION: UNION BENEFITS AND SERVICES**  
**ACCRUED MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**  
**MOTION 61**

**61. ACCRUED MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

This Congress calls upon the CEC to investigate as a matter of urgency the benefits of membership of GMB with a view to providing more benefits accrued by and increased by length of membership so as to increase retention.

LEICESTERSHIRE 2000 BRANCH  
Midland & East Coast Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. L. GUBB (Midland & East Coast): Vice President, Congress, this Congress calls upon the CEC to investigate as a matter of urgency the benefits of membership of the GMB with a view to providing more benefits accrued by and increased by length of membership so as to increase retention. This Monday at Congress lay members made their feelings known by voting for retired members to be able to carry on as branch officers whilst only paying the retirement payment and not continuing to pay full subscriptions. This, in my view, is a step in the right direction. Not only do we need to encourage young people to join our union for the right reasons, and as a by product by offering them numerous benefits that we do, but what about our long-term members? The majority of long-term members stay because they believe in the GMB and what it stands for. What can we offer them at the moment? Well, there is one benefit that they will not be collecting personally, that is, the funeral grant of £300 but only if they have been a continuous full financial member for five years.

As one of the six million plus working poor I struggle now to pay full contributions. I could pay less but then I would not be able to take an active role as I would like to. I believe in the GMB and what it stands for. I retire in seven years and a one-off payment of £25 compared to having to pay approximately £140-plus would make it feasible for me to carry on and help the union. Congress, I am sure there are many more members in the same position, if things do not change in the future. Yes, we need to recruit younger people, they are our future, but we also need to retain members for the longer term; all have much to offer the GMB. Remember, there is no greater teacher than the university of life. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Laine. Secunder?

SIS. D. MILLS (Midland & East Coast): Vice President, Congress, when you look at the recruitment figures for the GMB over the past few years, they have been excellent. However, the number of leavers over the same period is disappointing. One of the reasons for this is that it is far too easy to join when you have a problem, then leave when the problem is solved, and rejoin if you need to in the near future, but that is a separate matter. I know that various benefits are service related. The various financial benefits and legal services should not apply if you are not a current member. However, at present, there is very little extra benefit if you have been a member for six months, or even 60 years, nothing to maybe provoke a second thought when resigning that really would be in my interest to stay as a member if my circumstances changed for the better. Yes, we do want people to join us but we also want people to stay with us and we should try to structure benefits accordingly. Thank you. Please support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dorothy. Congress, RA355 has been withdrawn in favour of the CEC Finance Report, and also RA353 and RA354, so could I now ask for the mover and secunder of RA356 to come to the rostrum, please.

## **RULE AMENDMENTS**

### **RULE 54 FUNERAL BENEFIT**

#### **RA356**

##### **Rule 54 Funeral benefit**

**1 If a full financial member, who has been a continuous member for 8 years dies, the regional secretary will, having been given a copy of the death certificate, pay the widow, widower, member of the family or nominated person a funeral grant of £300. (This person will need to show that they are responsible for paying funeral expenses.)**

#### **RA356**

Clause No: 1, Lines 2 & 5

Delete: 8 years + £300

Insert: 5 years on Line 2

Insert: £500 on Line 5

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH  
London Region

*(Withdrawn)*

SIS. J. SMITH (London): Paul, I accept in your report that you are going to honour the request of reducing the length of service from eight years down to five. I have been working on this over a few years gradually bringing it down from ten years to five. I thank you for that. The only disappointment is the rate of the funeral benefit, the fact that you cannot see to increase it. By reading your report I accept that but, Paul, I will be back. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder? Formally? Thank you. Are you withdrawing that? *(No)* Formally second. Thank you.

*RA356 was formally seconded.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Paul Kenny will outline the CEC position in his speech on the CEC Finance Report and we will then take the vote on these motions. Is there anyone who wishes to speak on any of the motions? No? Thank you.

We are now taking items 5 and 6 together and I will call on Paul Kenny, the General Secretary and Treasurer, to move the Annual Accounts and Audit Report, move the CEC Finance Report, and respond to motions 40, 61, and RA356.

## **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND AUDITORS REPORT**

**and**

## **CEC FINANCE REPORT: CEC FINANCIAL PROPOSALS TO CONGRESS 2013**

### **Financial Proposals for Congress 2013**

Once again, the CEC is able to report to Congress a steady operating surplus for the 2012, carrying on an unbroken run of surpluses for the ninth year in succession. Income from members' contributions was more than £60 million for the first time, and membership again increased, underlining how continued financial success has been based firmly on the organising culture of GMB@Work.

Our forecasts for the current year show that we are on target to produce an operating surplus – as Congress has instructed that we must, to avoid the financial decline and disruption of earlier years. This will be achieved if the organising opportunities we have created are converted into new members, but there are other threats and pressures to our financial well-being.

Changes to the rules for the provision of legal assistance seem designed to benefit only insurance companies and unscrupulous employers. The present system is, for GMB, a very cost-effective way of providing top-quality employment, personal injury and other legal services free to our members. New regulations now in force could, unless the Union properly manages the challenge, add several million pounds to our costs.

HMRC are carrying out an aggressive programme of challenging all trade unions' expenses policies. They have withdrawn the permissions which existed for GMB's expenses system, and it is likely that any new agreement

with HMRC will again increase the Union's costs. The CEC has already had to adapt some procedures to comply with HMRC rulings, and it is likely that there will be further changes. The CEC's priority throughout this process is to maintain our organising strength and to ensure that volunteer activists are properly compensated for any costs incurred on GMB work.

Congress has regularly reinforced its view that GMB employees should be provided with a decent pension in retirement. The continued adverse financial market conditions mean that the GMB employees pension fund remains in deficit, and the Pensions Regulator, who is also showing a particular interest in trade unions, has stated that they expect changes to be made in the fund, which could include additional payments by the Union.

The Union is, like every other organisation, vulnerable to inflation in a range of cost categories, including energy, transport, paper and printing. There have been a number of successes over recent years in reorganising and renegotiating contracts with suppliers, particularly on mobile phones and cars. The CEC and the Senior Management Team recognise that it is now urgent that all aspects of the Union's outgoings are reviewed and subjected to a transparent and rigorous tendering process.

The finance to meet all these challenges will have to come chiefly from membership growth, achieved through constant focussed organising. However, to help the Union keep pace with general price increases, it has long been Congress policy to adjust contribution rates each year in line with RPI. Once again, the CEC does not consider it right in the present economic conditions to seek a full RPI increase. The CEC is therefore recommending an increase of 5p per week on all grades: this is less than half the rate of inflation for grade 1 members.

Congress increased the major cash benefits in 2011 so that the maximum payable is now 250% of what it was before the change, and this is working well. The CEC did consider increasing the amount of the Funeral Benefit, but after a lengthy debate, agreed that it was better that any increased funding should be allocated to reducing the qualification period for the benefit. Accordingly, the CEC recommends that the years of membership qualification for Funeral Benefit should be reduced from eight years to five.

Over many years, the CEC has adapted to changing employment patterns for young people by launching different recruitment initiatives and applying a variety of promotional rates for apprentices, students and other young people. Foremost in the Union's aims has been the imperative of engaging with upcoming generations to build a wide and committed young membership as a guarantee of the future strength of GMB organisation.

As a result, a huge number of different rates and practices have grown up across the Union and in different Regions. Some rates applied to apprentices in specific industries, others to working and non-working students and some to training programmes long since abandoned by government. The CEC recommends that the rates should be streamlined to give a clear and consistent message across all parts of the Union. It is essential that GMB organisers are given the means to build the Union among the growing ranks of apprentices. We also need to provide opportunities for student membership.

Rule 46 allows for promotional rates, and the CEC recommends that, under this rule, the contributions payable by apprentices should be £2.00 per month, approximately 50p per week. Once a member has completed his or her apprenticeship, contributions will be applied at the relevant Grade 1 or 2 rates, and membership records will be regularly reviewed to ensure the appropriate rates are collected. Students in full-time education will pay £1.00 per month: students in work will pay the Grade 1 or Grade 2 rates appropriate to their jobs.

The CEC believes this approach properly reflects apprentices' and students' ability to pay and provides simplified tools for organisers to target the GMB members of tomorrow.

The main message from the CEC on GMB finances is that there are real challenges ahead, and that they can only be met by universal, committed application of the principles of GMB@Work. The last eight years have been



a story of proud achievement in growing and strengthening our Union. The CEC asks Congress to agree to the proposals in this document to ensure that that record continues into the future.

**CECRA6.**

**Rule 45 Clause 1,**

**Line 3: Delete “£2.70”, insert “£2.75”**

**Line 8: Delete “£1.55”, insert “£1.60”**

**Clause will now read:**

1 Once they join the union, members will pay a contribution in line with this rule.

Members will pay £2.75 a week and be classed as grade-1 members, **unless** they are:

- part-time members employed for 20 hours or less;
- young people under 18; or
- recruited as being unemployed;

in which case, they will pay £1.60 a week and be classed as grade-2 members. However, grade-2 members can choose to pay the contribution rate for, and be classed as, a grade-1 member.

The above grades are only used for deciding what contributions members should pay and the benefits they may receive

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

**CECRA7.**

**Rule 45, Clause 2,**

**Line 4: Delete “£2.70”, insert “£2.75”**

**Line 5: Delete “£1.55”, insert “£1.60”**

**Clause will now read:**

2 Branch committees will have the power to fix the amount lapsed members (members who joined but later stopped paying contributions) need to pay to rejoin. This amount will be between £2.75 and £10 for grade-1 members and between £1.60 and £5.50 for grade-2 members, except in particular circumstances when we may increase the amount with the approval of the regional committee.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

**CECRA8**

**Rule 54, Clause 1**

**Line 1: Delete “8”, Insert “5”**

**Clause will now read**

1 If a full financial member, who has been a continuous member for 5 years dies, the regional secretary will, having been given a copy of the death certificate, pay the widow, widower, member of the family or nominated person a funeral grant of £300. (This person will need to show that they are responsible for paying funeral expenses.)

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you. Congress, if you see me suddenly jump and put my hands in my pockets, it is not that I am counting my money, it is just that I forgot to put my belt on and my trousers might fall down, and that would not be a wonderful sight! (*Laughter*)

President, Congress, I would like, with your approval, to move the Financial Accounts for 2012 that were in your wallets, the CEC Finance Report, and reply to motions 40 and 61, and reply, I think, to RA356 that we were seeking withdrawal of.

First, President, however, I want to set the context of our performance over the last decade, to remind some colleagues who have been around a while about how far we have travelled, but also to enlighten the expanding number of new delegates, of which of course again this year we have many. I am going to start with a few slides, I hope.

There you will see, effectively, the changes in GMB membership between 2004 and 2012. You can see the steady increase. Why is that important? Every one of you in this room knows that answer, because if you do not grow the union then the union declines. It is as dead straightforward as that. Good performance, performance in terms of growth and organisation that actually is not matched by virtually anybody; a really excellent performance built over the best part now of a decade.

Slide 2: This illustrates the GMB's financial position and for those of you who have not seen this before, you will see that the chart goes back to 1996. It goes up, as you see, up to 2003/2004, that every year the union actually spends more money than we said we would spend because the operating surplus, or deficit, is our budgets, what we set out at the beginning of the year to say if we are going to spend or not. When we changed ourselves in 2003/2004, then we started to live by a simple but very important rule. There was no point in having a congress, no point in you coming along, no point, Jan, in you seeking increases in benefits because, frankly, where was the money going to come from? Our answers seem to have been membership fell, contributions went up, and nobody seemed to know what to do.

Once we had got to the stage where we understood we needed actually to have a strategy, GMB@Work, you can see the result each year since then. Some years it has been very, very tight, very, very tight, but we know why, we knew why we were campaigning, we knew about equal pay, and we kept to those disciplines. We reduced our internal costs. Basically, there are three levers in any business and I have spent my life telling employers about not sacking people but make your business more efficient. There are three levers. You can push up the cost of whatever it is you are selling, so for us that would have been contributions, push them up, keep pushing them up, or you could actually sell more of what it is you are selling, which is increasing the membership, expanding the union, and you can actually get better value for the money that the members are asking you to spend on their behalf. Be as shrewd as anybody else when you are looking for telephone services, or printing. That is what we have been doing, a combination of all three; not coming to Congress year after year and saying, we need 20p, or we need 15p. That was the way we used to do it.

So, each year, and again in 2012 we made sure that we stuck to those rigid budget positions that this Congress, the CEC, and the senior management team have said, we will never come back to this Congress actually with a deficit budget and expect the members, who are hard-pressed, to bail out the inefficiencies of the organisation. We have, effectively, to live within the means that we have. It is an old worn out phrase, but we have to.

Slide 3: Our services. The first chart you saw was keeping to our budgets, not spending more, having financial internal controls. This is actually surpluses. It is pretty good. The red lines you see at the bottom, if that chart went down to the floor, right the way back, all you would see is big long lists of red lines, a big long list of red lines, losses after losses after losses. When again we changed and we got an understanding, a strategy, we began to pull together and we knew what we were good at, at organising, and convincing people about the benefits of trade unionism, the benefits of joining together, then we started to get to business.

Now, you might say, “Well, Jesus, this Kenny sounds like a bit of a capitalist to me.” I do not think particularly running the country would have been difficult for us given we were able to turn this mess round but the truth is we have been very successful at doing it, and we have to pay tribute to the people who made that happen. It was not me on my own, I can assure you. It was everybody who works for the organisation, the activists who produced the new members, everybody who had an interest in ensuring that GMB stayed a strong, independent trade union, not up for grabs, not up for hire, and not up for sell-out to the highest bidder because we could not organise ourselves. So, pretty good, but what have we been doing?

We have been rebuilding, and apart from expanding the number of people who work for us and the services we provide, changing the benefits, Jan, increasing the number of benefits down through the last few years, changing a whole range of things that we did, we have been rebuilding the assets of the union as well. We have been refurbishing the infrastructure of the union. People say the union is not buildings, it is not, but you cannot function in a tin shed, you have to rebuild those assets and that is what we have been doing. They are assets, we own them. We do not owe a penny to anybody at the bank. We don't have any more of that old nonsense hanging round our necks. We have rebuilt the assets of the organisation. We have done it against a backdrop that the key for the union to be independent and strong, and vibrant, and able to do many of the things you want us to do, the resolutions you pass, to do that we have to expand and we have to organise, and that is our key priority.

That is the backdrop about everything that we do. For new delegates, they might think, “Christ, that's quite an interesting bit of information.” I know for some of the delegates who have been coming a few years, when we first started to do that we used the same slides, I don't muck around with them, we use the same benchmarks every year, we don't put apples and elephants, we measure apples with apples, and I know for delegates who have been here a while I think when they first saw those figures come up, because it was never published like that before, when they saw it I think they were shocked, they were genuinely shocked about how the union had managed to go into decay and in decline, and not effectively managed itself particularly well. You as Congress, you as the parliament of the organisation, had every right and should always expect and demand that that sort of information is available to you so you can see what is happening in the organisation.

I will just turn a minute, if I can, to motion 40 and a few of the others. Motion 40 calls for a review of the union's investments on ethical grounds and I am happy to report the CEC is absolutely delighted to support a regular review and we will seek ways of building that more formally, actually, into our investment procedures. Sometimes that is going to mean selling up, as we did last year in reaction to Carillion, and we have done it. A colleague from the floor mentioned we had an investment in the *Daily Mail* one year and so we went back and got rid of it. As a reaction to Carillion's treatment of our own members in Swindon, we dumped that investment. Sometimes, you know, we will take a strategic holding, just a small one, to get our point across or to get access to shareholders' meetings. We also support joining with the TUC and other unions to try and use voting strength to raise particular issues, moral issues, at some of these big corporations' AGMs.

Motion 61 asks for a review of members' benefits. Now, as I said, we have actually done a bit, not as much as we would like but a bit, on expanding benefits, but we are actually very keen to develop them further. When I first joined the GMB, which was a fair number of years ago, actually the GMB was considered to be a benefit-led union, it actually was part of the package that you got people to join the union on, we were very proud about the number of benefits we had. What we have to do is look at benefits that relate to what people want today. It is a funny thing, some of the things that were around when I joined the union that looked out of date then in the 1990s, or maybe ten years ago, are beginning to look remarkably logical again. That is why I think that the CEC is happy to look at this.

The motion also seeks to link more benefits to the length of membership to help retention. Well, I am not quite convinced of the argument but it is worth looking at. It is absolutely worth looking at. We will continue to ensure that retention plays a big part in the benefits. If you get people to join the organisation in their 30s, particularly if they join through direct debit, there is a fair chance you are going to hold them for a fair number of years and our records begin to show that, the large number of people joining now between their 20s and 30s, a much, much higher level than we thought before.

Now, we need also to remember when we are targeting new members we need to have specific issues for them. For me the biggest single issue that a new member wants is they want service. That is what they want. They look to the union, exactly as the mover said, they come in sometimes looking for help. Well, that is what people turn to the union for. So when you talk about finances and resources you have to remember that, on the one hand, you balance it with benefits for people in the long term but there is no substitute for making sure that when people need the union in the workplace and on the ground the resources are there to make sure that it is done. Whether you are a member for a week or you are a member for 20 years, when you need that help, you need it.

Congress, I would say please support motions 40 and 61 with the statements I have said. But, you know, it is hard to keep on building the union, it is. These are difficult times, and you know that. You see them every day. That is why we have to take advantage of the chances that arise, things like Asda, and the care sector, because the Government is absolutely determined to damage this economy and with it working people. There are also other threats. One of the benefits of GMB membership has been traditionally access to really good top quality legal support and there is no doubt that this has compensated thousands of members over the years, and has helped enforce health and safety measures and changes to improve workplaces for the benefit of workers.

The Jackson Report: when I first mentioned the Jackson Report there were one or two colleagues who thought this was something to do with Michael Jackson, if only it were. This is a particularly nasty set of proposals aimed effectively at restricting access to justice for working people. That Jackson Report on legal services is effectively a charter drawn up by insurance companies to try and dodge compensation claims, reduce and water down the amount of money available for people with injuries, and to give comfort, frankly, to unscrupulous employers. Taken together with the Government's attacks on workers' access to employment tribunals, these changes are a real threat to our legal service. If we do not take some action, the union could be hit, frankly, for millions every year. What the CEC is not going to accept, what the SMT is not going to accept, and what I would ask you not to accept, is that whatever comes at us we will not dilute the legal services available to our members. Whatever happens we will not dilute those legal services. *(Applause)*

So, we are going to be radical. The SMT have been looking at a number of potential options because, you know, I wish this was not being broadcast live, you have to give all your secrets away, they do think they are very smart at times, they do, the people who sit down and work out how to screw us, they do think they are very smart, but, you know, the old shop steward in us is a bit smarter than them. So we have a few ideas and we are working on a few things, but I think we are working on the framework that we want to provide good high-quality legal services through our regional set-ups directly to the members as and when they need them, and that we are not going to compromise on, as I have said.

Now, the Finance Report mentions also the close interests our affairs are receiving from the HMRC and the Pensions Regulator. Well, I am happy to say we have absolutely nothing to hide. The rules that we followed, agreed with the HMRC for the payment of expenses and other issues, agreed years after years after years, suddenly out of the blue almost have been torn up. Now we are in the process of discussing, listening, or being dictated to, I am not exactly sure which it is at times, by HMRC about the issues, even about how we handle a small amount of expenses that people get to come to

Congress. Now, you would think, wouldn't you, if the HMRC had time on their hands they are going to sort out that Google mob, you'd think they are going to sort out that Amazon mob, you'd think they would go out and sort out all the other huffy-puffies who have their money going overseas? So why do think they are coming to pick on us? Funnily enough, it is not just us, it is all the trade unions. No, we're paranoid, aren't we?

Then the Pension Fund Regulator came in to see us. The union provides an exceptionally good pension for its employees, and so it bloody should; so it should. They work hard for it. We want to set examples. I would say there is nobody in this union that begrudges it. We set the standards. Like most pension schemes that pension scheme has a deficit. If there were 5% interest rates at the moment, it would not have a deficit. That is the crazy part about this world. It does not have a hole, there is no money missing. I haven't bought a new Caribbean island to go and live on, it's just the way the pension is, and those in the room who deal with it you know there are deficits.

Now, the Pension Regulator, this is an irony, really, because it was this union, amongst others, who actually demanded the set-up of the Pension Regulator in the wake of the Maxwell scandal. It was us. Now, they effectively, very helpful, suddenly appear again out of the blue and say, "We think you should wind up your pension scheme for your employees." I don't think that's at the top of our agenda. Why would we do so? We are engaged in a lively debate with the trustees, we are the employer in this case, you are the employer, the trustees, the employees have trustees, the actuaries, and various other groups, and there will be an interesting discussion with the regulator about why, how, and suddenly they are showing an incredibly interesting stance on trade unions. Okay, maybe I am still paranoid. The Jackson Report, hitting trade union legal services, HMRC suddenly coming out, Pension Regulator suddenly coming out, you don't think anybody has got it in for us, do you? (*Laughter*) No, couldn't be. No, no. Anyway, I am sure they haven't, really.

But on Monday, you know, a Tory MP and a few lords get their fingers caught in the till, again, the Tories and the Liberals announce they have the answer to corporate lobbying sleaze. You know what it is, set up a lobby register and clamp down on trade unions. Now I am getting bleeding paranoid. It is crude, it is partisan, and I think we know what it is.

There are challenges ahead, there's no doubt about that, and we have to be scrupulously clean and scrupulously fair at all times, and I haven't got a problem with that. We are open and transparent; people can come and see what we do. But people who are changing the rules in mid-game, that will have an impact that we are trying to work through, and I have no doubt that we will rise to the challenges facing us and the CEC and the SMT will continue to reform and control our financial controls because that is what you demand of us. But, you know, there is going to be a cost, I am sure, at the end of this and that is why we are being cautious about how we are doing. I don't want to have to come back here next year and say, "Well, yes, you know, we actually have run into a whole range of issues that we should have foreseen and we should have told you about."

So, the union is vulnerable to inflation, the same as the rest of you but the policy here at Congress, and for years has been, that contributions should be increased by the rate of inflation, but for a number of years now we have said, "Look, we don't need to do that, that's not the answer. It's not the answer just to go to the rate of inflation on contributions." In this year we had a long debate in the CEC because we are not immune, members on the CEC have not had pay rises for two or three years, they are not immune to what the membership is having, and we tried to work out how we could live with it, what we could do, what is the least we could do. If we had a contribution freeze, which makes us all very popular and people clap us and the rest of it, and then I have to come back next year, stand up here, and get stoned to death because I have got to ask you for 20p, then you are saying the members cannot afford that. So, there is a balance and it is a difficult one but I promise

you this, we are not looking for, nor are we ever going to look for, money just for the sake of looking for money, not a penny more.

So, the proposal this year is for a below inflation increase of 5p a week on all grades. I will make the point to Terry in case he asks me from here or in the bar later, every penny of that, Terry, is going into the general fund. It is not going into the political fund. We need every penny of that to spend directly on our own members before we think about doing anything else. Last year we increased the large cash benefits by two-and-a-half times. We can now offer a really significant sum to members and their families at critical times in their lives and we have been starting to do that, giving people a lot more than the £4,000 that was the previous benefit, now up to £10,000.

This year we thought we needed to do something about funeral benefit, and Jan is right, we looked at it a few years ago, we made a few changes, but I looked in the mirror and I realised I wasn't getting any younger, and we thought honestly it was time to do something. A good suggestion came from a member of the CEC that the time had come to reduce the qualifying period so we said, "Let's cut it from eight to five." We don't know what the financial impact is but, frankly, you cannot see people flying off of rooftops in order to get it, can you? It is not exactly a fortune and we are aware of that but at least doing something, bringing it down, is a move. Personally, having recently had to arrange a couple of funerals, I know that it actually does not dent anything. It is a very, very expensive time for people. So, it is a significant move and that is why we were seeking the withdrawal of those rule amendments in order to recognise that and say we will come back, and if we can do it, then we will do it.

The response to, I think, referred motions from last year, we did actually carry out a detailed study on the rates applied to apprentices and students and there were a host, I mean an absolute raft, of different practices in different regions so people were right, they flagged up these problems and we looked at them. There was an amazing number of, funnily enough, quite elderly apprentices and students; in fact, we found what must have been the longest serving apprentice in the history of the union, someone who had been on the apprentice rate for 19 years, very highly qualified they were too, I've no doubt, which also flags up one of the problems about making sure you are checking. The CEC said, "Look, let's just have a uniform rate." This is absolutely right, the Congress delegates are right, that all apprentices would pay £2 a month, that is 50p a week, and all students in full-time education should pay a £1, so you can join the union if you are a student for 25p a week. The students who are in work, working and getting the correct rate of pay, should pay the correct union rate and they would be, obviously, appropriate grade 1 or 2 members.

Colleagues, the union is strong and it is independent, and I get the real feeling that is how you want to keep it. A strong independent GMB is not vulnerable to takeover, it is not vulnerable to pressure from any corner, government or elsewhere, and it is the best guarantee we have of building an organisation and an opposition and a defence for the future of our members and their families. So I ask you, colleagues, to accept the Annual Accounts, support motions 40 and 61, with my statements, and support the proposed rule changes included in the Finance Report.

I think the union is going pretty well but the proof of the pudding is always about what you do next. What we have to do next and what we will have to do in the next few years, frankly, is to come to you with some revelations about how we need to spend a lot of money on campaigning and organising. If we are to change the political landscape, if we are to do something, as Pat said, it is a great time for talking but actually it is a time for doing as well, and if we are going to do that, then the truth is we are in a good position, thank God, that we can spend some money to do it. Thank you.  
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, I will formally second those reports.

*Annual Accounts & Auditors Report was formally seconded.*

*CEC Finance Report was formally seconded.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will now invite regions who wish to speak on the CEC Finance Report, so if all designated speakers from different regions make their way down to the front it will be appreciated. We will start with Northern. Can Yorkshire come up while we are waiting?

A DELEGATE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Vice President, Congress, at Congress 2007 Paul Kenny said there was no way he was going to jeopardise the financial security of the union. The GMB balance sheets every year since confirm this has been delivered. Colleagues, when it comes to finances, like it or not we are a business and that means we cannot spend what we do not have. We need to ensure income continues to rise so that we can continue to provide a first-class service to our members. Yorkshire Region welcomes wholeheartedly the recommendation of reduced rates for apprentices and students and whilst an increase in the amount of funeral benefit would have been nice, a reduction in the qualifying period to five years is most welcome. But this must come at a price and Yorkshire Region recognises that whilst people would rather not pay more, a modest increase of 5p per week given the huge value for money GMB membership provides is still the best deal by a mile. We need to remain a campaigning, fighting union, and this small cost is easily justified, and for those reasons Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Region supports the Finance Report. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Northern? North West and Irish? London?

SIS. J. SMITH (London): Paul, I did say to you I was happy that I was halfway there but from watching your graphs and your explanations, and I said I will be back, I will keep plugging away until we get a much more improved funeral benefit, we accept your explanations. On that basis, I will withdraw the 356 rule amendment and, Paul, London Region compliments you on that report and we accept it. Can I personally say, thank you, Paul; coming back in that seat, keeping us in the front line, and for all the hard work you have done on behalf of all of us, bringing us back into the black as you have well done over the years. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Wales and South West.

BRO. L. WOODWARD (Wales and South West): Congress, Vice President, Remploy worker, still here, still fighting, and I ain't going away. *(Applause)*

Congress, it is very pleasing that the operating surplus achieved for the last year was the ninth consecutive one since 2004. Colleagues, this reflects the combination of careful expenditure control and astute income generation techniques which serve to avoid the past practices under different General Secretaries of having to sell off the family silver just to balance the books. As the report states, much of our financial success can be attributed to the development of our organising and recruitment work undertaken mainly by our network of volunteer activists. However, the cost pressures facing the union come from a number of predictable sources, the Inland Revenue, the Pensions Regulator, and changes to the rules governing the provision of legal services.

The funding to meet and withstand these pressures has to come from growing our membership but also from applying a further modest increase in contribution rates. It has been a longstanding Congress policy to increase levels in line with headline inflation. This year once again the proposal for a 5p increase to all weekly rates falls well short of any inflation indexed increase and helpfully takes account of the squeeze upon wages in an economy blighted by the Coalition's obsession with austerity.

It is also noted that all the increases will be directed to the general fund. The report also provides for beneficial changes to the criteria for determining apprentice contribution rates and the payment of funeral benefit as well. The proposed rates for apprentices and students in full-time education of £2 and £1 a month, respectively, will also assist us in attracting younger people into the GMB thereby providing us with the opportunity to develop a cadre of younger activists for the future. These rates also permit clarity and consistency of application throughout the regions, which has not always been the case. The reduction in the funeral benefit qualifying period is also a positive step forward following on from the increase in cash benefits agreed at Congress just two years ago.

Congress, the finance report proposals are both well thought out and fair, and balanced, recognising the impact of a struggling economy for both the GMB and its members. It will allow our union to remain financially viable and competitive in those sectors of industry where other unions also recruit and organise. This is important as we strive to increase our membership density levels in key target areas of the sector, at regional and national level. Congress, we will always be able to compete on quality in the GMB but we must be able to do so on cost by providing an effective and extensive range of benefits and services within the envelope of affordability. President, my region commends the Finance Report to Congress. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Scotland? Birmingham?

BRO. D. KEMPSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): Birmingham and West Midlands Region is supporting the Finance Report. It is good to know that we have a surplus. Obviously, it is good to know that the General Secretary says he will do everything in his power to limit the issues with HMRC, hopefully, against our activists because they are a key part of the organisation. Hopefully, we will do all we can to cushion the effects of what this nasty government and the tax office is trying to do. The contribution increase, we totally support that because we have always said a small increase on a yearly basis is better than the old days where we did not have anything for a few years and then all of a sudden there was a sudden rush for a big contribution increase. Overall, I had nothing prepared to say on paper, I think the report is commendable for our region and for the rest of the union. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Southern.

BRO. A. NEWMAN (Southern): I commend the Finance Report on behalf of Southern Region. We do not have a lot to say on this but we certainly welcome the fact we have growth, we have money in the bank, we have financial probity, and we have independence. I can assure you colleagues here that over the last year we have been fighting against Carillion, the fact that this union has not had to answer to anybody else and have been able to fight independently has been an enormous asset to us, and I commend the General Secretary for the way the union is being run and look forward to what Avril Chambers said yesterday, organise, organise, organise, and as an independent union we will take the bosses on and we will win. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Midland.

BRO. D. JOBSON (Midland & East Coast): President, Vice President, General Secretary, Congress, speaking in support of the Central Executive Council Finance Report. Sisters and brothers of our great union, Midland and East Coast Region welcomes the CEC Finance Report and all the proposals held within it. It is encouraging to know that our union is currently financially stable and that the stability is based on the strength of a growing membership base, although we do take note of the hurdles before us stemming from new regulations regarding legal services, the HMRC scrutiny, and adequate pension provision for GMB employees, but we have confidence in the CEC and the Senior Management Team to act accordingly so as to comfortably clear those hurdles and land us firmly on



our feet. We feel our members will understand the need for a nominal increase to the contribution rate of 5p per week on all grades, despite the current economic situation and pay freezes we have been enduring whilst the cost of living has been increasing, but as long as we keep doing what we do best in supporting our members, they will feel they are still getting value for their money and the change to the qualifying period from eight to five years will add to this.

As a region that submitted three motions on the need for an apprentice rate in our union, we wholeheartedly accept the CEC recommendation to streamline the various local arrangements in the regions and create a standardised contribution rate across the regions not only for apprentices but also for students, both of which we feel will help invigorate our union with a new generation of trade unionists. We are happy that this can be done in accordance with existing rule 46 and consider the proposed rates of £2 and £1 per month for apprentices and students, respectively, to be fair and affordable to both groups, and that regular monitoring to ensure correct contributions in line with an individual's changing circumstances is good common sense.

Colleagues, as long as we do not sit on our laurels, and we use the tools we now have to keep growing our union, taking it from strength to strength, we will be able to keep our union great, we will have the means to meet our financial challenges and remain a force to be reckoned with. We support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Scotland.

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): GMB Scotland welcomes the changes to the document. Modest increases are still by far good value for money. We believe this is needed to ensure the GMB remains strong and competitive and GMB Scotland welcomes and supports this paper. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charlie. Can I now call on Paul Kenny to respond to the finance debate.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Well done! (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, motions 40, 52, 59, and 61, are all supported, and 40 and 61 with a statement. All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 40 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 52 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 59 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 61 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Birmingham and London Region have agreed that RA353, RA354, and RA356 are withdrawn in favour of the CEC Finance Report.

*RA353, RA354 and RA356 were WITHDRAWN.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I now move to the Annual Accounts and Auditors Report. All those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

*The Annual Accounts and Auditors Report was ADOPTED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The CEC Finance Report, all those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

*The CEC Finance Report was ADOPTED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We will now go on to the Employment Policy: Rights at Work. Could I ask the movers of motions 113, 115, and 136 to come down to the rostrum? Thank you.

**EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK**  
**TRIBUNAL POWERS**  
**MOTION 113**

**113. TRIBUNAL POWERS**

This Congress deplores the Coalition Government's intervention in the Tribunal system whereby Tribunals will lose the power to make statutory recommendations for failing employers. Under Section 124(3) of the Equality Act 2010 a Tribunal where a discrimination claim has been successfully brought could recommend an employer to take steps to address the problem that occurred. Once again this Government is attacking this Act ignoring all consultation recommendations and we call on the Labour Party to support us in condemning their continued dismantling of this Act.

PONTYPRIDD GENERAL BRANCH  
*Wales & South West Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. I. BOUNDS (Wales and South West): President, Congress, the Equality Act became law in October 2010 and sought to ensure consistency and fairness from employers at the workplace. Anti-discrimination legislation has helped to make Britain a more equal society. The 2010 Act provided a legal framework to both protect individual rights and advance equality of opportunity for everyone. The Act set out a range of provisions which strengthened and extended protection from employment discrimination. The Act enabled employment tribunals to make recommendations that employers should introduce or vary workplace policies and practices so as to confront discrimination and disadvantage.

Congress, the Equality Act provisions came into force at different times to allow time for people and organisations affected by the new rules to prepare for them. The Coalition Government has decided to repeal these wider powers conferred upon employment tribunals to make recommendations where a successful discrimination claim has been brought. This provision was a useful means by which employers had to take specified steps to alleviate the adverse effects of workplace discrimination. Those steps would require the employer to take remedial action to address the problems experienced by the individual. The tribunal recommendations were not necessarily confined to any successful claimant but could be extended to a larger group of workers or even the entire workforce.

As such, section 124 of the 2010 Act was universally welcomed by the GMB as an important and progressive measure designed to promote good equalities practice in the workplace and surprisingly, however, this Government does not share our policy objective of extending the scope of protection to areas of employment where discrimination occurs. Section 124 was limited to the making of recommendations by the tribunal. The employer could not be compelled to adopt any of them. A failure to act upon them would be taken into account, though in subsequent discrimination cases so that some pressure could be applied to correct and prevent further discriminatory behaviour.

The Equality Act provided for some beneficial enhancements to workers' rights. Section 124 obligations represented a step in the right direction by placing some degree of pressure upon unscrupulous employers. With the absence of the ability to make recommendations, employers would be less motivated to change their ways making it more probable that they will reoffend to the detriment of our members who have to endure workplace discrimination.

Discrimination in employment is an industrial malaise not reconcilable with a modern developing society. Despite the existence of discrimination law, there is everyday evidence of continuing bad practice in the workplace; regrettably both individuals and organisations assist in discriminating against others. The untimely and unacceptable repeal of section 124 will just make things that much more difficult when trying to achieve fairness at work.

This motion calls upon the Labour Party to join with us in condemning and opposing the withdrawal of the recommendation instrument and to commit to its immediate reinstatement when next elected to government, hopefully 2015. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, colleague. Seconder?

SIS. S. HARRISON (Wales and South West): First-time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, this Government like its Tory-led predecessors has a clear and vested interest in making access to industrial justice increasingly more difficult. This is easily explained by reference to their perception of the balance of influence between their paymasters and those of the members that we represent. Denial of the reduction of employment rights is very much part of their attack on ordinary working class people who seek only to achieve remedy against those employers who have treated them shabbily. The attempt to intervene in the system and cause loss of the power to make statutory recommendations in discrimination claims is just another example of how the government wishes to dilute the responsibilities of employers for their actions in causing our members difficulty and distress at their places of work.

This motion seeks to commit the Labour Party to their support of our opposition to this change and in doing so to demonstrate their wider subscription to restoring a fairer and more level playing field when it comes to using the employment tribunal system. Colleagues, discrimination at work is an industrial albatross that needs to be removed from the shoulders of our members. The power to make corrective recommendations is limited but still important to provisions that need to be retained in the tribunal system. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Well done. Motion 115, Birmingham.

## **UNFAIR MOTION 115**

### **115. UNFAIR**

This Congress, we know how the Tories have taken away our rights as workers but the most shocking is the fact that all tribunal 'unfair dismissal' claims are only heard by a sit alone Judge with no panel members. So we tell all GMB instructed solicitors to ask for a full panel when attending an 'unfair dismissal' tribunal so our members get a fair and just hearing.

W75 WORCESTER COMMUNITY BRANCH  
*Birmingham & West Midlands Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. S. ROBERTSON (Birmingham & West Midlands) moved motion 115. He said: President, brothers and sisters, and Congress, as probably most of you know before April 2012 when an unfair dismissal claim was reaching the hearing stage it was held in front of a panel of a judge and two lay members, one of the lay members from an employer background and, more importantly, one from an employee's background, very often a trade union background, perhaps even some of our comrades in the hall, like wee Jackie from Birmingham Region who sat on panels for years, donkeys' years. Although they have to act independently that has meant we had somebody who understood and had knowledge and experience to see things from a worker's perspective and they could fight the worker's corner when discussing the case.

In one case prior to April 2012, Lady Smith when throwing out an appeal pointed out that if it had happened after April 2012 the wrong decision would have been made because the judge was overruled by two of his lay members. She suggested that a move away from this industrial jury was a backward step. We have been saying that since it came in. She also said there should be careful consideration given to a request for a full panel. Now the jury amendments have come in, judges will sit alone on unfair dismissal cases unless they are otherwise directed. We can make a request and the judges do not have to accept that request, but they have to consider it.

We, the GMB, must make it the norm that our instructed solicitors make these requests for lay members to be present unless there is a very good reason not to. They should do this as a matter of course to ensure that there is fairness and a balanced hearing. This may go some way to stop the demise of the tripartite system and help ensure that our members get a fair and just hearing when they have been unfairly dismissed. I ask you to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Steve. Secunder?

BRO. A. CORBETT (Birmingham & West Midlands): It would be nice to think none of us in this room or any of the members that we represent will ever be dismissed. However, we all know the reality is different. The removal of our rights to have a case heard by a full panel is yet another erosion of our rights as working people. The wing members on a panel were put there for a reason. They are there to offer an inside viewpoint on what is acceptable in the workplace as a matter of practical rather than legal reality and all we are asking for is the chance for a fair and just hearing in front of a full panel and should be a basic right for all working people. Congress, I ask that you support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Motion 136.

## **THE PRINCIPAL OF JUSTICE MOTION 136**

### **136. THE PRINCIPAL OF JUSTICE**

This Congress calls on the GMB to examine and if needed put right the increasing practice of our legal advisors who would seem to be increasingly encouraging our members to take out of court financial compensation settlements rather than going to tribunals to seek true justice even in cases when the member has a strong case.

We the GMB pride ourselves on being built on principals and we recruit by telling members that we will fight injustice and we will support and back them if their rights are attacked. Unfortunately the truth is that too often when they are made an offer to settle members are advised that if they don't take what is considered a 'good offer' then they are on their own.

In reality some of our members care more about our principles and their right to have 'their day in court' than any monetary compensation settlement. They need and want to hear the legal system say that what has happened to them is wrong.

The GMB must put a system in place that attempts to put a stop to unscrupulous bosses who get away with unfairly dismissing, discriminating against or causing harm to our members by being able to just pay them off to keep their mouths shut and go away.

If it has already been established that legally a member has a good chance of winning and they want to pursue their case by taking the company to task on the basic principle of what is right and what is wrong. We the GMB should continue to support them for putting our GMB values and principals before that of the legal corporate businessman and compensation culture.

*(Referred)*

BRO. S. ROBERTSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): Brothers and sisters, comrades, Madam President, this motion asks the GMB to take a good look at ourselves when it comes to standing up for our members who hold unscrupulous and often immoral bosses to account. In recent years we have indeed looked at ourselves, we have looked at our financial affairs, we have looked at how we are organised, and modernised, how to become a more inclusive union, we have looked at our relationship with the Labour Party and so on and so on, but the time has come that we must look at how we support our members and how we defend their rights when they have suffered and been the victims of unjust practices by rogue bosses and companies who are able to flout the law without fear of punishment.

According to statistics, last year alone the number of tribunal claims dropped by 16% and an even more shocking statistic that covers the representation at tribunals by trade union and legal representatives shows there has been a real drop of over 100,000 cases being represented over the last couple of years. We should always be careful with statistics, they are easily manipulated, but does this mean that bosses have become more fairer? I doubt it. Does it mean, as the Government will no doubt tell you, this reflects the success of their reform in employment laws as part of a growth strategy? That will be right!

Most of the Government's reforms in employment law have not yet come into place and when you take into consideration these figures the Jackson Report makes it very uncertain. The removal of civil liability on the spin of this compensation culture is worrying times. It absolutely terrifies me. Next year's statistics, how many will get to a tribunal and get justice. I do not know what the future holds for our members that have been unfairly treated but the fact remains tribunal claims and representation is in a steady decline. This is what the Government wants. This is what their mates in business want. This is what bad bosses want.

It would appear that the trades union Movement and our legal advisers are content to play along with this and accept compromise agreements and settlements which allow for injustice and unfairness to prevail and rogue bosses to go unpunished. I totally understand to take cases to the full hearing is expensive and the payouts are often heavily outweighed by the cost but we, the GMB, must look at clever ways of adjusting this cost, and ultimately make sure if our members wish to pursue the employer all the way to the court, then whenever feasible we should support them. If any of our members wants to stand up and fight for justice and put righting a wrong before personal financial gain, then we should be supporting them right to the end, not just until some corrupt boss offers them what is seen by the legal profession as an acceptable bribe to shut up and go away.

This union was built on the ideas of justice and principles in defending workers' rights and we should not be pandering to big business. We all heard from Margaret, the woman for the Hillsborough families, and were inspired by her. They did not give up. They did not sell out. Let's take a leaf out of their book and make justice GMB's number one priority. I move this motion and ask that you support this motion to take the fight, where possible, right to the end into the ring. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steve. Secunder?

SIS. C. BARNETT (Birmingham & West Midlands): President, Congress, comrades, as the mover has already alluded to, this union was founded on the doctrine of truth and justice. Our core principles are and should always remain standing up and fighting injustice wherever it occurs on

behalf of our members. History tells us that whenever the Tories have their hands on power workers' rights are taken on a journey back to the future. They thrive on their belief they have a divine right to rule with the return to the master and servant days being something they crave. This time they have the LibDems as cheerleaders and with their support have just introduced massive changes to workers' rights in the shape of the Enterprise and Reform Act 2013. Essentially, they took advice from a multimillionaire, a venture capitalist, Adrian Beecroft, how best to make it easier for employers to sack people and restrict their access to tribunals, hence denying justice. That just cannot be right.

The easy way out for the guilty corporate is to buy the silence of the employee through a compromise agreement. My own employer, Stoke on Trent City Council, has used this method 1,372 times since 2010. We must fight these latest draconian laws for the sake of our members and the interests of natural justice. This fight must be won for us all. I second the motion and ask you to show solidarity and support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well done. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? Thank you. Can I call Roy Dunnett, CEC, on motions 115 and 136? Roy.

BRO. R. DUNNETT (CEC, Commercial Services): Speaking on behalf of the CEC on motions 115 and 136, firstly, on 115, this rightly calls upon the union to instruct solicitors to request a full tribunal panel in unfair dismissal cases. The GMB lay members are likely to get a fairer hearing when lay members are part of that tribunal as they bring their experience to bear in a way that no judge or lawyer sitting on their own can do. There are many people in this hall who can testify to the value of having union members on employment tribunals and the commonsense approach that they take. The GMB is opposed to the removal of lay members and the fact tribunals are becoming more like courts because this has led to increasing injustice and a more formalised approach.

We say the GMB policy is to request a full panel in all unfair dismissal cases and that should be the default position. The qualification is that the CEC believes there should be limited discretion to depart from this position and only if the member prefers not to proceed on that basis, or if for some other exceptional reason. Congress, justice for workers in employment tribunals is under attack by the current Coalition Government and these wholesale changes are designed to restrict access to justice.

On motion 136, this motion is calling for the union to examine and, if necessary, put right the position whereby the union solicitors advise members with a strong case to accept a compromise rather than pursue them all the way to a full tribunal hearing. Naturally, the CEC would want to support members in highlighting injustice and, indeed, sometimes where such cases go to full hearings we can change the law. However, there are many factors involved even where their case appears to be strong. The member may not wish to go through the stress of a full hearing and there is always risk involved in litigation, and there can be costs penalties, and later this year fees to pay if a case turns out to be unsuccessful. As Paul has also reported, there are other factors such as the introduction of the Jackson Report, which will have a major impact on the union's legal services in the coming years. The CEC therefore asks Congress to refer the motion so that we can develop a policy position in line with the other changes to the legal services.

Congress, the CEC asks you to support motion 115 with the qualification I have outlined and refer motion 136. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Roy. Does Birmingham Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Will Birmingham Region refer? Oh, dear, the silence. (*Agreed*) Are you trying to get my blood pressure up? Congress, Birmingham Region has agreed to refer. Does Congress agree? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Can I now put 113 and 115 to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are carried. Thank you.

*Motion 113 was CARRIED.*  
*Motion 115 was CARRIED.*  
*Motion 136 was REFERRED.*

THE PRESIDENT: We will now move to the next business, Industrial and Economic Policy: Manufacturing. I will be calling 154, Wales and South West Region, 155, Trident, Northern Region, 156, Yorkshire, 157, Yorkshire, composite 7, Remploy and Supported Employment for Disabled People, 153, Remploy. Can the movers and seconders come to the front, please? Will the mover of 154 please come to the platform?

**INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY: MANUFACTURING  
DEFENCE INVESTMENT  
MOTION 154**

**154. DEFENCE INVESTMENT**

This Congress is aware that following this Government's 2010 strategic defence review, reductions in defence investment has left major gaps in our maritime capability. Locally, Devonport Naval Base and Dockyard have been particularly badly hit, by cuts in the capacity of the Royal Navy which is at an all-time low. This lack of investment means that all facets of defence, especially those that involve our members, has seen a steady but inexorable decline with a corresponding drive down of GMB membership. Our members face hardship and uncertainty, let us not forget, from the lessons of history this dangerous attitude has been played out by successive governments and has cost this country dear, it affects all of us who work in the defence industries and let us not forget that many of our Trade Union members and their families are in the front line serving in or alongside our armed services, many more have been or are ex members of the regular armed or reserve forces. We therefore call upon this, and indeed any subsequent government to increase defence spending and ensure that we safeguard our Dockyards and future maritime capability.

DEVONPORT BRANCH  
*Wales & South West Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. N. WARN (Wales and South West): Congress, the first duty of any government is to protect and defend its citizens yet coming to power one of the first things the Government did was to hold a so-called Strategic Defence and Security Review, which has decimated our Armed Forces and has put the defence of this country at risk. The reality is that it was a spending review dressed up as a defence review. It was a review conducted and hastily prepared and was simply not credible as a strategic blueprint for our future defence needs.

Within weeks of the HMS Ark Royal being decommissioned four years earlier than planned and the UK's Harrier Jump Jets axed, the UK was embroiled in enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya. Whilst Italy and the USA had carriers, British planes had to fly thousands of miles and be based in Italy to undertake the mission.

With the Navy losing a large part of its service fleet, a reduction in the number of ships, such as frigates and destroyers from 24 to 19, all currently heavily tasked in the Gulf or East Africa, and elsewhere, means already there are no spare warship capacity or aircraft to protect British trade routes. Considering that 95% of all UK trade goes via ships from this country and imports 80% of its gas by 2020 and 61% of its oil by sea, the decline in the Royal Navy is an act of true strategic folly.

In addition, the Army will be slashed to its smallest size since the Boar War, 131 years ago, a staggering 17,000 regular soldiers are being axed, 25,000 civilian MoD staff axed, 5,000 RAF personnel axed over five years, and 5,000 Navy personnel cut.

The UK Defence Institute represents 10% of the UK manufacturing and is number one in Europe and second only to the US globally, employing over 300,000 people and generating over £35m per year in the UK economy. The industry also works hand-in-hand with the UK Armed Forces from the factory to the front line; for example, over 4,000 industrial personnel are currently working with our troops in Afghanistan.

Each year defence exports provide an average of £5bn to the UK economy and it is the largest overseas supplier of defence equipment to the United States. The demand from overseas for British-made equipment from fast jets to helicopters, electronic systems, and personnel kit for individual troops, is high because of its quality and reliance.

The UK Forces also provides confidence to export customers. Defence exports from the UK have grown in the recession with excellent returns for this investment. The UK has a 21% share of the defence export market and in the last five years defence support 65,000 UK jobs.

Defence in the UK is responsible for 40% of defence R&D in Europe, and a contribution of £12bn in value added to the UK economy in 2008, up to 50% since 2006. The defence industry in the UK submitted twice the number of patent applications compared with the pharmaceuticals sector in 2007 and 2010.

Just to finish, on the South West of Scotland, all across the UK, our members face hardship and uncertainty. Let's not forget the lessons of history, the dangerous attitude being played out by successive governments that costs the country dear and affects all industry, the defence industry, and not forget our trade union members and families are at the front of all of this. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Seconder?

BRO. A. DE-BANKS (Wales and South West): President and Congress, defence cuts are putting the United Kingdom at risk. Those are not my words but those of Admiral Sir Sandy Woodward, who warned that the UK will be unable to defend itself, nor able to defend its interests abroad if cuts to the Navy and the rest of the armed forces continue. Admiral Woodward, supported by other senior military figures, including Brigadier Julian Thomas, Admiral Sir Michael Lanyard, has warned that failure to address the central issue of our defence could see territories such as the Falkland Islands ripe for the taking. So Sandy has commented that the most recent Strategic Defence Review, commissioned by the Con-Dem Government, has created significant and serious gaps in our national defence, and that these cuts have already reduced the UK's international standing which, in turn, is likely to impact on our trade and energy interests.

Let's not kid ourselves, colleagues. As a result of the Strategic Defence Review, the UK is becoming a different national in international politics. Let us discuss this situation in terms of jobs. The aircraft carrier project alone directly employs in excess of 6,000 people. Many are our members. I am one of them. That's just the first tier of personnel who are directly involved in building the bloody things. Then you have the contracts and sub-contractors. In total you end up with hundreds of companies employing well in excess of 10,000 people. We have over 300,000 employees working for MoD projects through contractors and sub-contractors around the country. We have people abroad working for the MoD in civilian capacities and these people need to be protected. Defence jobs matter. Supporting our armed forces and maintaining our security matters. Our democracy, values and way of life matter. Please support Motion 154. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I call Motion 155.



## **TRIDENT MOTION 155**

### **155. TRIDENT**

This Congress calls for much more boldness in the debate on Trident and its successors so the many thousands of workers, their families and many local communities involved directly and in the supply chain, have some certainty for their futures and a vital UK skill base is retained.

BARROW 5 BRANCH  
*Northern Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. G. MAYOR (Northern): Congress, I move Motion 155 – Trident. In the Northern Region we are privileged to have the Barrow Shipyard that has a superb skill base, as we saw last year at our Congress in Brighton. The Barrow Shipyard builds the class of submarine that carries the Trident missile system. It is estimated that in Barrow and the surrounding areas in Lancashire up to 30,000 jobs are involved in both direct and indirect employment if you include the supply chains. The Barrow Shipyard is regarded as the best type in the UK. There is only one other in the world and that is in America that can provide the skills necessary to build nuclear submarines.

There are those who believe that those jobs should be redirected into civilian work. Congress, we have heard that before in relation to countless other defence and shipyard jobs where we have been assured about enterprise zones and retraining into other work. We know what the upshot of all that talk-the-talk and walk-the-walk is – low-paid work or the dole. We have a very straightforward solution, which is for this Government's parties, the Coalition, and the Labour opposition to give a clear signal on the Trident replacement. Either we, as a union, are happy to put our defence members, their families and communities into generations of poverty, or we stand up and fight. We must take the fight to the Government and the Labour Party. The skills base in south Cumbria and north Lancashire are vital in keeping the local economy afloat. They are vital to the future of the UK. Otherwise, these job skills will be lost forever. I urge support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

SIS. R. WILKINSON (Northern): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I second Motion 155 – Trident. The simple fact is that without employment in Cumbria and north Lancashire a cycle of poverty in areas such as the former counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland would, again, become the norm. For centuries poverty was only reduced through the move to industry. Prior to that, going back for centuries, areas, such as that known as Cumbria, were amongst some of the most deprived areas of the country. It would be a scandal at the very time when the local and national economies need all the jobs and income they can get if areas and employees who obtain income through their involvement in building Trident were made redundant. The debate about what replaces Trident needs to take into account the economic and jobs argument. I invite anyone who thinks that Trident should not be replaced to join me on the doors in the areas that would be affected. I invite anyone to look local people in the eye and tell them that they should be retrained, why they should give up their livelihood and why they should travel much further to work.

Congress, it would be madness to throw away generations of skills, built up and passed down. It would be madness to turn our faces against more jobs and a better deal for local people. It is vital that we get a sensible debate and the right decision for our members who are employed in the industry so that we can retain essential skills and jobs. We can't go on with this issue being put off. We call on all parties at Westminster to give us the certainty we need. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call Motion 156.

## SAVE OUR STEEL INDUSTRY MOTION 156

### 156. SAVE OUR STEEL INDUSTRY

This Congress notes with concern the 23<sup>rd</sup> November announcement by Tata Steels of 900 job losses in the UK. Whilst tempered with the news of investment by Tata, that is of no consolation to those losing their jobs and their families. In addition, the job losses will impact on local economies, both in terms of reduced spending in local shops and the knock on effect on other businesses in these areas.

Tata's announcement shows the total failure of the ConDems policies. If they were working, large scale job losses would be a thing of the past, not the regular occurrence it has become since 2010. It is also an indictment on the lack of support for Britain's steel industry in particular and, in manufacturing in general, by successive governments. The proud record of the British steel industry is being consigned to the history books. Just like our utilities, the steel industry is no longer British owned. As a result of the failure to protect British industry, our livelihoods, our economic well-being is not in the hands of EU bureaucrats, as the right wing tell us, but by foreign capitalists. The time has come to change all this.

As the Tories and Lib Dems cannot be trusted, Congress calls on the Labour Party to offer alternative policies to protect the steel industry in particular and manufacturing in general. It needs to discuss with trade unions, rather than just employers, about what needs to be done, including serious consideration of re-nationalising the steel industry. Without steel, nothing gets made. Just as with utilities and transport, the steel industry is too important to be left as the playthings of capitalists.

Save our steel industry. Save our jobs. Save our economy.

PARKGATE BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I move Motion 156. I am claiming squatters rights on this rostrum. President and Congress, on November 23<sup>rd</sup> last year Tata announced restructuring plans at its UK steel plants, a euphemism for around 900 job losses. For every steelworker who loses their job, another four jobs are lost elsewhere in local shops, in companies that supply the steelworks and elsewhere. That is a total of 4,500 jobs lost thanks to decisions made by faceless owners. To the people who own hotels, even Tetley Tea, Land Rover and a myriad of other companies, job losses in towns they have never heard of mean nothing. Neither does the destruction of these towns.

Britain has a proud history of steelmaking, surviving both Hitler's and Thatcher's attempts to get shut of it. Now all of our major steel companies are foreign-owned, being asset stripped, not of plant and machinery but of 250 years worth of knowledge and knowhow. This is not being a little Englander nor nationalistic. We, equally, abhor British bosses exploiting workers in other countries.

The steel industry is strategically important to Britain. Historically, it was the barometer of how the economy was doing. Steel is the raw material behind most manufactured products. Even if a product doesn't contain steel, the machinery that made it certainly does. Just like our utilities, the steel industry is too important to be left in the hands of those with no regard for anything other than their own profits. We need to change from doing things in the same old way. We need alternatives to the policies of the past 30 years. Comrades, there has to be another way. For far too long now Labour politicians have cow-towed to bosses and bankers. To formulate viable alternative policies, it is time to listen to those who know the industry better than anybody. It is time to listen to those who have invested not their money but their lives in the steel industry. We must look at nationalising it again. I urge you, comrades, to support Motion 156, tell the Labour Party to work with us and together let's save our jobs, together let's save our steel industry and together let's save our economy. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Secunder?

BRO. K. GILBERTHORPE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, I support Motion 156. Just so you know, I am from the Sheffield Boilermakers branch.

Congress, when you look at what has happened to the steel industry, you see what has happened to British manufacturing in the past 30 years. Where once steel mills existed, they are now shopping centres and theme parks. What remains of the industry is mainly foreign-owned. The firm, which was synonymous to steel, Sheffield Forgemasters is now American owned. These foreign owners don't care about the history of the steel industry. They don't care about the local communities. They don't even care about the effect they have on the British economy. All they care about are their own profits. This situation cannot be allowed to go on. We need to look at doing things differently for the sake of the steel industry, for the sake of manufacturing and for the sake of the British economy. We know we can't trust the Tories and their allies to do anything different, but we should be able to turn to the Labour Party.

However – there's always a "however" – the Labour Party has to change from the ways it worked during the Blair years. It has to listen to us, not the bankers and the bosses. We all accept the importance of investment but what about those who work in the steel industry?

If Labour had listened to us instead of the money men, the country wouldn't be in the state it is in now. We are now telling the Labour Party to look at nationalising the steel industry. A nationalised steel industry would, therefore, be for the benefit of all British manufacturing and for the British economy. British Steel's products are the best, and I mean the best. From hi-tech buildings through to satellites, British Steel has a variety of users. Rather than going out of the country, imagine would could be done if the income from the steel industry remained in Britain. Support Motion 156.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ken. Motion 157.

## **BRITISH COAL MINING INDUSTRY MOTION 157**

### **157. BRITISH COAL MINING INDUSTRY**

This Congress deplores the way in which the British Coal mining industry has been allowed to decline, and urges the government to provide incentives for investment in the industry.

YORKSHIRE COAL STAFFS BRANCH  
*Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, it has been another sad year for the UK coal mining industry. Two more deep mines closed. We didn't have that many left in the first place. Coalfield Resources, which used to be UK Coal plc – they had to restructure to save money – now only have two operating deep mines; one in Nottinghamshire and one in Yorkshire. Their employees are never sure whether they will be paid at the end of each month. Then there is Hatfield, also in Yorkshire, being operated on behalf of administrators after its previous owners went bust, which is looking dodgy. There are still some surface mines, a couple of independent mines in Wales, and all are having problems. You would think that we have no coal in the UK, but we do. There is plenty of coal but no access to it, no money to invest or to sink new mines. UK coal operators are struggling to survive.

The Government – not just this one but previous ones – say that coal is part of their energy mix, but they do nothing to support our industry. During the past few winters, coal burn in electricity generation has increased considerably. This has been due to cold winters, the ability of coal to respond to demand and the high cost of gas, so that electricity generators have produced their power more cheaply by burning more coal. Have they passed that saving on to you? I don't think so. But they have also used up their allowance for emissions more quickly, which will lead to some coal-fired power stations closing sooner than planned, probably leading to an energy gap. Great stuff! What good long-term planning – not!

The Government are developing a strategy for gas, presumably to ensure that we have more than six hours supply, but they have nothing planned for coal, which is always able to respond to demand and prevent an energy gap. It looks like any coal burn in the future may only be from imported coal. All the coal currently produced in the UK is being snapped up, but sometimes at prices which don't allow the producers to survive. With such a small industry, there are no economies of scale to be had, and the workforce is getting older. Something needs to be done, and done soon, or by next Congress who knows if we will still have a coal industry? I know this is a time of austerity but energy is a prime need, both for industry and for individuals. Coal is still an important part of that energy mix. We need to ensure that our coal industry can survive these difficult times. The Government need to put their money where their mouth is and provide incentives to help UK coal producers or be totally dependent on imports. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I have to say that Pamela has been the most staunch and persistent supporter of our coal industry. I think this Congress should pay her credit for that. *(Applause)*

BRO. D. SIM (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I second Motion 157. President and Congress, Britain is facing an energy crisis. Experts are predicting that unless there is a major re-think of the national energy policy, then the lights in Britain could go out in the next three to five years. Only last month the Crown Estate reported that the country came within six hours of running out of gas. We are increasingly reliant upon the importation of gas and coal which, in turn, leads to unpredictable supplies and prices. We are importing these products when we are sitting on 400 years of coal reserves. There has never been a better time for investment in the British coal industry. This investment would create thousands of jobs across a whole spectrum of industry, whilst producing a sustainable supply of fuel and predictable stable prices for the future. This, of course, would require massive investment and, Congress, I do not believe for one minute that the present Government would look at a blueprint for investment in coal.

We call on the next Labour Government to look at and develop an energy policy that incorporates the British coal industry. As a country, we need a sustainable supply of affordable fuel for the future. A British coal industry can provide this. Comrades, I am ex-coal miner who, along with thousands and thousands of others, went on strike for a year throughout 1984-'85 because we believed that coal had a future. Twenty-eight years on we still believe that coal has a future. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call Composite 7.

## **REMPLOY AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE COMPOSITE 7**

### **C7. Covering Motions:**

148. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE *(North West & Irish Region)*
149. DISABLED WORKERS *(Northern Region)*
150. EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE *(Northern Region)*
151. REMPLOY *(Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region)*

### **REMLOY AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE**

Congress condemns the actions of the Con-Dem government in closing Remploy factories. It is an absolute disgrace to see all these Remploy factories closed down, years and years of hard work just gone down the drain. Remploy back in the 1970s employed over 12,000 employees just to see 40 years down the line NOTHING absolutely NOTHING.

Since the first announcement in March 2012 of Remploy factory closures and then the second announcement in December 2012, over 3,000 disabled people have lost their jobs for no fault of their own and over 70% of Remploy workers are still unemployed or have still not found alternative employment, the most vulnerable disabled workers are the ones most affected

According to DPAC – Disabled People Against Cuts – Disabled people who want to work are more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people in all official statistics since records began. For example in 2011 the employment rate was 48.8% for disabled people compared to 78.5% for non-disabled people. Initial figures reveal that approximately only 35 disabled people out of 1,200 have managed to find work, making this closure of Remploy a complete and utter scandal.

Brothers and Sisters, a bigger scandal would be to leave the situation of employing disabled people as it is. A situation which leaves disabled people with very little hope of ever being financially and socially independent. Disabled workers have the right to seek meaningful work on the same terms as the rest of society and it is a scandal that the current Government has sought to hide behind cuts to end decades of Remploy employment. The SAYCE report is not being followed as there is a total disregard of social enterprises and workers co-ops. Little or no help has been given to the disabled workers themselves to set up such enterprises.

After the disgraceful decision of factory closures by this coalition government; disabled people have been given neither the support and/or opportunities to retrain to get the mainstream jobs they were promised in the SAYCE report; this must be addressed by exploring alternatives such as funded co-operatives etc so that some of our most vulnerable members in society have the dignity and respect they deserve.

Now is the time for Congress to ask what the next Labour Government is going to do in providing work for disabled people and what financial support they are going to offer in bringing back specialist workplaces for disabled people. Not only will it provide an income but also bring in a training programme to help our children of today with learning difficulties to establish themselves when they are ready to go to work. This Congress calls on the Labour Party to signal a new start for disabled workers after decades of the death by a thousand cuts in the Remploy brand.

We urge congress to endorse a campaign/lobby of the Labour Party to include in its manifesto for the 2015 general election a commitment to consult with GMB and other unions, in the first term when elected, on supported employment for people with disabilities; and this Congress to pressurise Labour when re-elected to carry out an immediate review of the employment of disabled people which also includes proposals for a profitable and sustainable factory and skill based employment. Only with a new deal for disabled workers will we see an end to exploitation and Congress calls for the Labour Party to implement this in its Policy Programme for Government after the next General Election.

This Congress notes that, whilst GMB policy was to fight the closure of Remploy, the condemned work programme has also been a spectacular flop. Something which does not console those disabled people in Remploy who were (and still are) made redundant from Remploy. This Congress should be pushing the next Labour Government in re-opening Remploy factories and be putting in place supported employment for disabled people. This Congress therefore calls upon the GMB to continue its fight to defend the remaining Remploy workers and oppose any further attacks on vulnerable people within society

*(Carried)*

BRO. T. GLEDHILL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am an ex-Remploy worker, still here and still fighting, moving Composite 7. (*Applause*) President and Congress, it is a privilege to address the Congress on such an important topic. I worked for Remploy for 27 years, and I have a vast issue to cover in, I hope, four minutes. There is a lot of anger around with what has happened with the Remploy workers. We have had a death of a thousand cuts over the last 20 years. Before I get to that bit, I want to mention one word that I think was omitted yesterday from the General Secretary's Report. You know when you are writing and you get to the end of the page and you write "Remploy" and it is on the paper underneath, you pick it up and you think, "Oh, shit, where's that word gone?" That happened. We do accept the General Secretary's Report. It just probably slipped off.

Who is to blame? It's a bit like a Who Dunit, isn't it? Who did it? If we listen to Iain Duncan Smith, he said that Labour started it because they closed 27 factories, but he would say that, wouldn't he? He wouldn't lie to us because he's a dead-honest bloke. In reality, the Tories were the iceberg that caused the damage in 1994 because they changed the priority-suppliers' scheme, and from that point the good ship Remploy – Titanic – was failing. It was broken, it was riddled with holes and it was sinking. The Remploy board and the DWP, God bless 'em, shuffled all the deckchairs around on the Titanic but, for some reason, it didn't sort of help, but we didn't think it would. We had an idea. Just like you see with Johnny Ball, "I've done the maths". If you've got a gas-guzzling boiler and you replace it with a new model, then it pays for itself. That is another bit of free advice for Ed, just like Paul gives.

The alternative plans that we put forward over that 20 years with Phil Davis, who retired last year but he is still here because he won't bugger off (*Applause*) show that he fought like a tiger. He really did. Talk about inspiration, dedication, time and everything else. The praise I feel for Phil is fantastic. He was backed by Paul, the CEC, the Regional Secretaries, the RECs and the entire combined force of the GMB and the other unions, yet that still didn't convince this Government. Do you know what they did? In fact, they did just like Paul said yesterday. No matter where we went with it, they weren't going to do anything. Like the little mouse – it was his brother, actually, because the first mouse got eaten – "We're going to show this cocky shit of a lion this time that he's not going to win and we'll beat him once and for all."

I'll let you into a secret now. Our gas-guzzling boiler is now called "enabled works", and it is a new set-up that we have got, which is a not-for-profit organisation, owned by the workers' co-operative. You can Google it. You can go on @Enabledworks and other search engines are available if you don't use that one. It is a shiny new toy. How is it different? First of all, it's run by the workers and owned by the disabled workers themselves. I mean, bloody hell, that's radical, isn't it? We actually own the company. Do you know what else? The PAYE payroll is run by the workers, the VAT is run by the workers and the accounts are run by the workers. I mean, chuffin' Nora, who'd have thought that we couldn't do something like that? We have a social and community-inclusion strategy. There is a training, learning and skill-development strategy. There is also a business enterprise and employment strategy which, for some reason, Remploy could never get right. They seemed to mix them all up. They were trying to be all things to all people at all times. It was just another Eton mess. So we have learnt from the mistakes of yesterday and we are not going to repeat them.

The directors of the company are treated as part of the workforce. Everybody is on the same terms and conditions. They are all on the same pay and treated equally and with respect. How did we start it? The workers put their own money into it. We started the company with our own money. We contacted the ODI, and they said, "You can't have any money. There's a £8 million fund set up to help Remploy workers", but we couldn't have any because we were trying to replicate a Remploy factory. I mean, what's wrong with that – disabled people working together in the community that

we started, we owned it we ran it, yet we couldn't have any money out of the fund? That's like getting up at Christmas and having no batteries for your remote-controlled car. Anyway, we have got this set-up running. What we want is for Congress to support us with that. We want them to take it to the Labour Party and show them that there is an alternative model and we have set it up. It might need tinkering with. We ain't afraid of that, but EnableWorks works. The York Disabled Workers works. Ashington Embroidery Services works. Aberdeen Textile & Workwear Services works. We set them out. The workers have set them up. They are owned and run by the workers, for the workers. All we ask from Congress, that we go to Labour and to the Con-Dems and we get this up and running. If the model wants tinkering, then we tinker. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

BRO. J. SMITH (North West & Irish): Congress, I second Composite 7. The story so far within the North West is that we have seen three factories open: Wigan, Bolton and Oldham. These factories are being managed by seven failed senior managers that when employed by Remploy their salaries were up to £300,000 a year. Both Remploy and the DWP were demonstrating to the consortium that they were looking for bidders who were in the best interests of the taxpayer. Congress, how the blazes can you allow managers to re-open factories that, for many years, were run into the ground and continued to waste taxpayers' money? These factories, when running under Reploy, employed over 200 people. They now employ 40 people barely giving them above the minimum wage, and the managers, at the same time, are reaping a substantial wage and reaping in profits. We need to establish that this work being undertaken at the present moment was in the books of Remploy. It was in the front-order book of Remploy, and if that the management had efficiently and professionally run Remploy in the first place, Remploy would have been operating as a thriving business today.

Congress, we need to establish what are social enterprises. You cannot compare these factories to the likes of EnableWorks or the York Disabled Workers' Co-operative. Let me go on. The GMB this time has made history when it comes to consultation. I am talking about 90 day's consultation. The point is that the one factory in Wigan managed to get 180 days' consultation, thanks to our little Brian, *here*, because he never shut up. He was like a little Scottish terrier, chirping and barking away and getting his word in about Wigan. At the end – I mean the end of not 90 days but 180 days – the board of Remploy actually admitted that there were bids in for the assets of Wigan. That is how they got the Wigan factory, but nothing was said right throughout the 90 days of lies and deceit from the Remploy board, stipulating that nobody had shown an interest in those factories when all the time something was going on.

Within the next few months I'll be unemployed or working for a private security company because it will be the end of Remploy. I would like to thank Paul and Mary and the National team for all the effort and campaigning they have done in their fight to save Remploy. I must not forget Kathleen, sitting at the end of the top table, for all her help in public procurement and in getting the message across in Brussels. I also want to thank all the Regional Secretaries right across the country for their help in trying to save Remploy. A special "thank you" must go to my Regional Secretary, Paul McCarthy. He has been a tower of strength.

BRO. K. STUBBS (Northern): Congress, I am an ex-Remploy worker, still fighting, and speaking in support of Composite 7. The last 38 years of working for Remploy has taught me an awful lot about the complex subject of disabled people. Those last two words alone illustrate exactly what this Rag, Tag and Bobtail-shambles we call a Government most cynically and callously ignored – disabled people! How can I forget the employee from Wales who, after his factory closed, has been taken into care because he can't look after himself? His family couldn't cope with him 24-hours a day, so now he has no family, no job and no hope. Congress, I could go on for hours about the hardworking

ex-Remploy employees and their cases, but in all of them there is one constant. This Government does not care about disabled people.

Brothers and sisters, I have seen at first hand just how this devious, divisive and incompetent Coalition Government have added yet another scandal to go with the many, many others that have been inflicted upon the ordinary working man. We believe that we now owe it to disabled people to invest in them, not some tuppence-halfpenny certificate hanging in a reception area. No. We want to see real investment in real people. We certainly don't want a race-to-the-bottom culture that we now have, nor do we want a work programme that does not work.

This motion calls on Congress to set out a new start for disabled workers by pressing Labour to invest in and provide sufficient financial support for the sustainable employment of disabled people in a workplace environment that they can cope in. With your support, we can do it. Support Composite Motion 7. By the way, we are not going away! *(Applause and cheers)*

BRO. B. DAVIES (North West & Irish): Congress, I am proud to have worked at Remploy. Within two months Remploy factories will be gone. Every factory will have gone, gone into new ownership. They'll be gone. Every factory gone, gone into new ownership. We will never have the terms and conditions that we had. People come up to me and say, "Well, you've lost your battle." I'll tell you one thing now. The DWP wanted to close Remploy down 10 years ago, and if it wasn't for that man up *there*, Phil Davis, it would have gone, and the people round *here* stood up and fought for us to carry on. They fought for us for 10 years. I am proud of that. *(Applause)*

Everyone in this room can do disabled people a favour, because 40% of disabled people ain't working because they don't want us to work. The managers think we are small and we don't do 'owt. Some do but I don't. That is by the bye. You can ask your manager when there's a job coming out: "How about asking a disabled person so they have an opportunity for a job?" Next time you have a meeting with your manager, mention it. Next time a job comes up you should ask, "What about a disabled person? What about the people who worked for Remploy but lost their job because the Remploy factories closed and lost their jobs?" You can do that. You can help us do that. Thank you. *(Applause)*

SIS. D. MILLS (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I am speaking in support of Composite 7. We fully support this composite. According to DPAC – Disabled People Against Cuts – disabled people who want to work are more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people, as shown by all official statistics since records began. For example, in 2011 the employment rate was 48.8% for disabled people, compared with 78.5% for the non-disabled people. The SAYCE report is not being followed as there is a total disregard of social enterprises and workers co-operatives. Disabled people have been given neither the support nor opportunities to retrain to get into the mainstream jobs that they were promised in the SAYCE report.

This Congress therefore calls upon the GMB to continue its fight to defend the remaining Remploy workers and oppose any further attacks on vulnerable people within society. Please support this composite. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call Motion 153.

## **REMPLOY MOTION 153**

### **153. REMPLOY**



This Congress endorses a campaign for an independent inquiry into the closure of Remploy factories. Consultation of the final 54 sites with GMB and other unions was a sham and anything but meaningful. Government ministers Maria Miller, Ian Duncan Smith, Ester McVay and this coalition government now need to be made accountable for the disgraceful treatment of disabled workers at Remploy.

REMPLOY YORKSHIRE BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

BRO. T. GLEDHILL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I'm still an ex-Remploy worker, moving Motion 153. President, this Congress endorses a campaign for an independent inquiry into the closure of Remploy factories. Consultation was an exercise that Remploy had to go through by law but the consultation was a sham and not meaningful. No surprise there, then. It was rushed through, information was sensitised, it was covered and they said it was commercially confidential so we couldn't have the information we wanted. We were always a meeting behind because at one meeting we would ask for information, and they would give us that at the next meeting, so we did not read it until later. We just carried on like that. We did get our 90 days which, sadly, the next lot, just because there are a few left, will only get 45 days because of the change in the law. To be honest, we were shit on. It wasn't just a seagull but an albatross. We got a real bucketful of shit.

Steve Kemp got a meeting set up this year with Andy Burnham and Anne McGuire, which was in March, and that is going to be followed up next month where we will be reporting everything that has gone and what we have done. We have got Margaret Hodge on board who is opening an inquiry through the Public Accounts Committee on the issues that were affecting the Stirling factory and healthcare issues. We did have Andy Burnham on Tuesday agreeing that there should be investigations into the bid to buy the factories, which have been kept secret. Finally, the GMB General Secretary, Paul Kenny, has authorised unfair dismissal tribunals for all our dismissed members so that we can pursue justice. I would like to thank Paul for that.

The fight goes on. Remploy workers are still here. We are fairly embittered about the treatment that we received from the Con-Doms; sorry, the Con-Dems. I would like to thank the Remploy-GMB Consortium members and the ex-members for all their dedication and fighting and still being there for people and still taking calls when people are desperate.

Under phase 1 36 factories were closed down, and most of those who were dismissed are still not employed. Under phase 2, Automative, which is Derby, Coventry and Birmingham, are not yet in phase 2, but they are up for sale and we are looking for an international bidder, according to KPMG. The textile factories have just lost the 6,000 unit CBRN personal protective suit order, so Clydebank, Dundee and Leven are now under even greater threat of closure because they have no order book. The furniture sites of Sheffield, Neath, Port Talbot and Blackburn have got a best and final bid against them. We don't know what the bid is, only the name of the company. In Cowdenbeath there is marine textiles. They have a bid against them. Again, we don't know if that is an asset-only bid or a business transfer. Packaging sites at Sunderland and Norwich have had another bid against them, and again we have no details. So this is consultation but everything is under wraps.

Employment Services, which is the agency arm of Remploy, have had an extension, and that is mainly because they are delivering Government contracts, and the Government would have to sue themselves for not delivering on their own contracts that were awarded to Remploy. So they are not yet in phase 2 but they have been told that they will be sold up or broken for private sale in regions or areas, or there will be a takeover. As I said, they will only get a 45-day consultation when that does eventually happen.

When I said in Composite 7 that we have an alternative model of EnableWorks, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't pursue these public inquiries on the Remploy murders, because just like war killers the Con-Dem killers should be brought to justice and they should answer for what they have done. We want to ask the GMB at Congress to continue the pursuit relentlessly on our behalf. Thank you. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Seconder? (*Formally seconded*) Thank you. Congress, there is no CEC speaker. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. L. WOODWARD (Wales and South West): Congress, I am still a Remploy convenor of Remploy workforce, or whatever is left. I am a proud fighter. We gave the bastards one hell of a fight, didn't we, yeah? Didn't we? (Applause) All delegates here need to give yourselves a big clap. As was said earlier on, they would have beaten us back in 1999, and even further back in 1995, if it wasn't for comrades like yourselves who stood by us. So give yourselves a big clap. Go on. (Applause)

Comrades, we will talk about the spirit of 2015. Seventy years after 1945, the country was skint. We didn't have a pot to piss in, as they say in South Wales. What did we do? We formed the NHS, we built council houses and we started Remploy. Comrades if we are going to have a 'Spirit of 2015', Paul, give us a shopping list – I'm sorry, mate, but you left one big thing off that shopping list – we need Remploy factories back in production. We need supported employment back for disabled people and we need it back in the first term of office. (Applause) If the Con-Dems can come in and close Remploy down within 18 months of being in power, then we can re-open Remploy factories within a 12-month of being in power. (Applause)

Comrades, we must not say, "Please can we have?" This must be one of our demands that goes into the manifesto of the 2015 Labour Party campaign. It's got to be a demand of ours that we support disabled people and never again will a Labour Government close any factories. The fight goes on, the campaign goes on. Let's have a public inquiry. Let's start our campaign now. Thank you very much. (Applause)

BRO. H. SMITH (London): Comrades, President and General Secretary, I am standing *here* today and I am witness to an incredible situation that is taking place in the midst of our trade union. Remploy is an example. Disability is not an inability. (Applause) We are in the midst of a global agenda. Depopulation. Nye Bevin stood, and when Winston Churchill conceded to the comments that they were vermin because he hated them, he realised that a truth had been said. I stand here today and say the same thing but with a twist. The vermin has now become the parasite, the parasite of the Con-Dems. Cameron and Clegg are the parasites who at present we are fighting against. We need to inoculate them out of our system.

I refer now to the Monarchy. In the *Morning Star*, my favourite newspapers that wakes me up in the morning, they are referred to as "dysfunctional people". I call them dysfunctional scroungers. We are giving them £21 million of our taxpayers' money for them to sit on their backsides, wave their hands and saying that they are in favour of us, their people. They are not our people. They are there for themselves. Every November we have *this* woman standing, waving with the other crony following behind with a wreath, standing at The Cenotaph, saying that they are supporting and giving considerations to the deaths that have been betrayed by mankind to save this country. Yet here we have Remploy, that was created by servicemen who fought for this country and they now want to destroy that situation. Get them out of that place. (Applause) We are here now in the midst of capitalism. Capitalism has been challenged. Capitalism breeds fascism. We need to get fascism out of the system, fascism out of the globe. The global planet is a social and democratic place for mankind to strive and function. From my perspective, the only way that we can get rid of the idea of

fascism is a democratic, let me tell you. We want a revolution. We have the power and the motivation. Let's get this Movement on the road and get rid of hypocrisy.

GMB, my family, I give you thanks to be in this presence. President and General Secretary, let's get this show on the road. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Follow that, Dick.

BRO. D. POLE (London): My God, I've picked a bad time to come to the rostrum after those two brilliant speeches, and especially as I'm only going to raise a procedural point, and I'm sorry. President and Congress, our branch has got a free vote on these motions. Once again, we are in a dilemma. As I said, I've got a free vote. I know that my branch would want me to vote in favour of some and against others, but I don't want to pre-empt what you are going to say. However, I am in that difficult situation again. Having heard those two speeches, well, goodness. I just wanted to bring that to your attention and ask that we do have a separate vote on these.

THE PRESIDENT: Is there any specific one that you want me to do separately?

BRO. POLE: I would like them all to be done separately, if possible.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. Why did I guess that was coming. Next.

BRO. B. TAYLOR (Northern): Congress, I am speaking in support of Motion 156. The steel industry is an important part of the Teesside economy, and in 2010 we nearly lost steelmaking. With the help of all the unions, including local MPs, we managed to retain steelmaking in the area. So it is so important that we continue to fight to ensure that we have steelmaking throughout the UK. Please support the motion.

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland): Comrades, millions and billions of pounds are spent on public procurement. Labour councils could have given contracts to Remploy, which could have saved Remploy. No problem. There is no reason why Remploy should be closed down – absolutely none. If each council had given their local Remploy a couple of contracts, things would have been better. I know there is European law and that they have to do another tender, but if Labour gets back into power, they must re-open Remploy.

Most of the people who have worked in Remploy will never get a job outside. Percentages were spoken about earlier on about the disabled. Amongst blind and visually-impaired people, the percentage goes up to 75% of blind people who have never been employed. The RNIB ran a campaign and they did a poll having contacted some employers. 90 per cent of employers said that it was impossible to employ a blind person. The other 10% said that it was nearly impossible. As I said, I worked for 40-odd years, so there is something wrong somewhere. Support the motion.

BRO. S. D'SOUZA (GMB Scotland): This is my first Congress and first speech. (*Applause*) Madam President and Congress, I am supporting Motions 156 and 157. When I was growing up as a young child my uncle used to live in Sheffield. Whenever we used to have a meal, we would look at our cutlery and see "Made in Sheffield", and you were very proud of that. It was "Made in Sheffield, England". Nowadays it is very difficult to find anything saying "Made in Sheffield" on any cutlery.

In Scotland there are problems with Scottish Coal. It has an uncertain future. The greatest threat to our future prosperity is the lack of a manufacturing base and a lack of energy mix that is safe and sustainable.

On Monday, for those of you who managed to stay behind, we saw the film *The Spirit of '45* that highlighted austerity after the war and the vision of the Attlee Government coming in to restore Britain. That was achieved by planning and the transparent structure. What we have seen in recent years is fragmentation, lack of planning and kneejerk reactions to policies.

On hearing Owen Jones the other day, it was great to see young people rekindled. We need to rekindle that *Spirit of '45* in an updated revision with the *Spirit of 2015*. That's what we need to do. We owe it to the next generation to get it right as we thank previous generations for getting it right for us. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. D. LASCELLES (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I am speaking in support of Motion 156. You have heard it now from Scotland, you have heard it from Yorkshire and now you have heard it from the North East. This is the version coming from the Midland & East Coast Region wherein, of course, lies 'sunny Scunny, Scunthorpe. The cost of replacement of the coke ovens at Scunthorpe, where I happen to work, are currently being watched rather carefully by Her Majesty's Environment Agency. They are full of asbestos, and probably a bit like me. The replacement will cost an estimated £1.2 billion. I don't think we are going to get that in this day and age, but who knows. What we don't want – the United Kingdom needs investment – is the stuff coming in from abroad. Of course, we are faced with the alternative of the coke being made in a different part of Europe, for Tata Europe, as Tata Steel is called, and then coming through the Channel Tunnel by rail.

Congress, please support the motion and the sentiments that were expressed originally by the delegate from the Yorkshire Region. I am happy to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, there is no CEC speaker, but I do think in reply to the last debate on Remploi, Les, Remploi has never, ever been off our agenda and it never will. (*Applause*) While we can afford money to go to war, we can afford money to open our Remploi factories for people who have been injured in action. I am proud to have been involved, I will always be involved and so will Paul Kenny and so will the GMB. The point is that you deserve the right to work like anyone else in this country. Thank you. (*Applause*)

I now move to the vote. As you heard, I was asked if I would take each motion separately. Yes, I will. I will not make the cock-up that I made yesterday, but there we are.

All those in favour of Motion 154, Defence Investment, please show. We are supporting it. Anyone against?

*Motion 154 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 155, Trident. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against?

*Motion 155 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 156, Save our Steel Industry. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against?

*Motion 156 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 157, British Coal Mining Industry. We support. Anyone against?

*Motion 157 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Composite 7. All those in favour? We are supporting. Anyone against?

*Composite 7 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 153 – Remploy. All those in favour. We are supporting. Anyone against?

*Motion 153 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, colleagues. That was an emotional debate. We will now move on to some motions left from yesterday.

**INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY  
SOCIAL JUSTICE  
COMPANY FAILURE  
MOTION 217**

**217. COMPANY FAILURES**

This Congress is concerned at how employees are suffering when companies collapse due to decisions taken by chief executives and boards of directors, and believes laws should not just protect employees, but also penalise directors.

YORKSHIRE COAL STAFFS BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, two years ago I was hauled out of retirement to take part in talks with UK Coal in order to completely revise the terms and conditions and contracts of employment of our members. This was because the company had been so badly run it had huge debts and needed to cut its running costs. As we sat in the meeting with the new chief executive, we were given a copy of a press release which stated that the old chief exec, he who had steered the company on to the rocks, was leaving with a huge payout of hundreds of thousands of pounds. We said, “How can we go back to our members and tell them that we are negotiating what would probably be worse pay and conditions?”, and this chap was walking away from his virtually bankrupt company with all this dosh! Ahhh, apparently, it was in his contract. Well, the terms and conditions that our members enjoyed at that time were also in their contracts, but if they still wanted a job and a pension we had no choice but to sit round the table and hammer out the best deal which we could. If we didn’t, the company would fold and they would get nothing.

There will be many other companies where GMB members have had similar experiences. For those of us who worked in the coal industry, that was privatised in a different way to the other nationalised industries, and there has been a succession of chief executives who seem to have been totally incapable of making it succeed. In the meantime, the lads and lasses at the pits are being dragged along with pits shutting, losing jobs, having to move to other pits and wondering whether the pension scheme would survive. I have not heard of many of the former chief executives living off the dole. They all seem to end up okay. How come? If they fail, they still get their whacking great payout and a fabulous pension, which is more than most of their workers get as a salary, and then they get taken on as consultants, non-executive directors and all sorts of cushy numbers with their mates.

I spoke several years ago at Congress about the gap between the top pay and the ordinary workers. This gap seems to have widened even more. Is there no shame? Obviously not. When a company goes bankrupt and all the workers lose their jobs, if this is because of decisions made by the board of

directors, surely, they should also be penalised. Contractual golden handshakes should be made null and void. We all know of directors paid huge bonuses regardless of targets, with employees taking pay cuts and losing jobs. “We’re all in this together”, or maybe not. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pamela. Secunder?

BRO. B. KIRKHAM (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second Motion 217 – Company Failure. President, it is a situation that is becoming increasingly familiar, a business going bust. Workers and our members are then left without a job. The sudden closure of a business can have devastating effects on families and local communities, but what happens to the employers, the chief executives and boards of directors, those responsible for ultimately making the decisions which only too often lead to the collapse of a business? The answer is nothing. They are able to move to new boards and new directorships, free of any penalty. There are too many companies out *there* who plunder vast sums of money while the workers’ terms and conditions are being smashed and job losses are a permanent threat.

The introduction of corporate manslaughter legislation goes some way to address corporate responsibility and provide the means of accountability for serious management failures, but what we need is tough co-operation and regulation on how businesses are managed to prevent negligent decision making for profit over jobs. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 218.

## **DIRECTORS’ PAY MOTION 218**

### **218. DIRECTORS’ PAY**

This Congress is appalled that many directors of companies in the UK are receiving massive percentage increases year on year in their salary. Companies are making smaller profits but the directors are still receiving vast amounts of money. The average pay increase for workers is forecasted to go up by less than 3% in 2013 while directors pay in many cases could increase by over 25%.

YORK GENERAL BRANCH  
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(*Carried*)

BRO. J. SHIELD (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 218 – Directors’ pay. We call on this Congress to condemn the appalling way that directors of most companies receive massive increases year on year in their salaries. While companies are making smaller and smaller profits, these greedy board members are still receiving vast amounts of money. The average pay increase for workers has been less than 3% this year, and yet in many cases directors’ pay rises have been around 25%. However good or bad they perform, they still get to cream off lots of money, leaving the dregs for the real workforce, and they don’t even have to put in an honest day’s work to receive the money. They just pat themselves on the back and take the money.

Where I work we went into our pay negotiations with realistic expectations, hoping for at least an inflation-matching pay rise. In reality the offer we got was way below that. Armed with a report on our company’s profits, we asked why the board had given themselves an 18% pay rise? Their answer was that there had been an increase in board members. These board members seem only to stay for a year. They get the money and then move on. What they are doing cannot be right. It is just fiddling with figures. Even when they fail to deliver they still get some sort of golden parachute when they leave. Being on a board of directors now must be one of the most lucrative career options available.

If, as a union, we can keep bringing these injustices to light, then, maybe, one day we might get a fair deal for everyone. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

BRO. M. HIRST (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I second Motion 218, Directors' Pay. We ask you to support this motion to highlight the disgusting and unfair way that directors of companies, no matter how low profits are or how poorly the company is performing, think that it is perfectly acceptable for them to take a 20% to 25% pay increases, whilst telling the workforce, "We can only afford to give you 1% - 2%, if any." We, as workers, understand that if the company is doing poorly we accept low pay rises, hoping to keep our jobs. "Every year you will take your unearned 20% to 25% and it puts mine and the rest of my members' jobs in jeopardy." So we say to these directors, "Show the same commitment as your workers and cut your pay rises to the same as your workers; ie, 1% to 2%, if any." Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? (*No response*)

I now put Motions 217 and 218 to the vote. We are supporting. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against?

*Motion 217 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 218 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: I call the General Secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: President and Congress, this is quite a serious moment. In the early hours of this morning a fire broke out under what can best be described as "incredibly suspicious circumstances" at the Islamic Centre in Muswell Hill. The building was gutted and destroyed. The arsonists sprayed EDL slogans on the outside walls. That is the English Defence League. They can still be seen on the charred shell, as you may see tonight, when you see the pictures on the TV.

President and Congress, our values are clear and our statements are clear. We should condemn in the strongest terms this evil, vile, cowardly, racist act. (*Applause*) We should make our position clear to the right-wing thugs of the EDL. This attack was clearly designed to set neighbour against neighbour and fuel anger, division and conflict amongst the community.

Congress, I ask you to give me authority to send on your behalf and on behalf of all members of the GMB the support of the GMB to the community in north London. Let us send a message to racists everywhere, saying, "There is no grace for you in our society." Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul, and thank you, Congress. No more can be said. Can we, please, move on to Motion 256.

## **SOCIAL POLICY**

### **GENERAL**

#### **CALL FOR AN END TO ENTICING LOAN COMPANY ADVERTISING**

##### **MOTION 256**

#### **256. CALL FOR AN END TO ENTICING LOAN COMPANY ADVERTISING**

Congress agrees advertisements for pay day loans are in abundance on TV and the internet every day.

These ads are purposefully bright, colourful and attractive and lead potentially vulnerable people down a very slippery slope to a big hole that is hard to then get out of.

This Congress asks that the GMB put pressure on the Advertising Standards Authority to end them and also lobby this Government to create legislation to ban these legal “loan sharks” from broadcasting misleading advertisements on TV stations and the internet.

HAVERING BRANCH  
London Region

*(Carried)*

SIS. W. WHITTINGTON (London): Congress, I move Motion 256 – Calling for an end to enticing loan company advertising. Good afternoon, Madam President and Congress.

Before I get started, bear with me in a bit of experimental fun that is relevant. There are many of us here today who no doubt have ingrained in their memory the following advertising campaigns. Please feel free to join in. Here we go. Are you listening? Who remembers “All because the lady loves.....”?

THE DELEGATES: “Milk Tray”.

SIS. WHITTINGTON: Thank. That was a man jumping from a helicopter, skiing down mountains to deliver chocolates. Can you believe that it started in 1968? And you still remember it. I must mention that other chocolates are also available. Take this one: “For hands that do dishes can be as soft as your face, it’s mild green....”?

THE DELEGATES: “Fairy Liquid”. We saw mother and daughter – it’s so wrong – washing up together.

SIS. WHITTINGTON: “Vorsprung durch.....”?

THE DELEGATES: “technik”.

SIS. WHITTINGTON: Audi cars. I’m sorry about the pronunciation. For the younger delegates, they might find the following more familiar: “Tell ‘em about the....”?

THE DELEGATES: “honey, Mummy”.

SIS. WHITTINGTON: Sugar Puffs. “Compare the.....”?

THE DELEGATES: “market.com”.

SIS. WHITTINGTON: Let’s not forget the incredibly moustached opera singer in the “Go compare” add which, as you have seen, the advertising company has reeled customers in by stringing him up or blowing him up to keep the consumers interested. I hope by this you understand what I am saying about clever advertising sticking in your mind, a mind worm. In many cases, they encourage you to buy or use services. After all, that’s what they are for, but is it right that pay-day loan companies are allowed to advertise in the same way? These adverts are bright, colourful and amusing. They are all meant to draw the eye away from the finer details that are put in small print at the bottom of the screen. This extra-small print tells the consumer that the actual rate is an eye-watering 4,214 annual percentage rate if it was calculated over a year. For example, if you borrowed just £100 to help you



through a bad month and then were not able to repay it, in a year this amount would jump to £4,214, without any extra default charges or interest on the interest, etc, assuming that you had not paid any of it. Correct me if I am wrong, because my maths are not good.

Last year a 19-year-old was jailed for 14 months for stealing jewellery after breaking into a shop in Melksham, Wiltshire. The court heard that it was his first offence and came after he had a ‘Wonga’ moment and borrowed £50 from the company. That initial small loan, the judge was told, grew into a £600 debt and he became desperate. He is just one of thousands who are struggling with repayments to Wonga and other such loan companies, companies such as PaydayUK, QuickQuid and Wage Day Advance are still preying on the poor and vulnerable in society. They do state that they have a clear structure, what it will cost you and how much you will have to pay back. Even so, should they have enticing advertising on radio, television and the internet? I know that some would say, “But no one makes you use them” but, unfortunately, it is a fact that people do, especially in these times. If they were less attractive, would people be drawn in so easily? They are still, in my opinion, legal loan sharks. Please, support the motion before Congress to put more pressure on the Advertising Standards Agency, as I know there have already been many complaints, to put an end to these ads and also to lobby this and any future government to create legislation to ban these legal loan sharks and from broadcasting misleading and enticing ads from the TV, radio and internet. After all, it’s been some time since advertising cigarettes and drink have been banned or not shown before a certain time because they are bad for your health. Isn’t it about time that the same was done for these ads because I believe that they are bad for your wealth. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. C. KERR (London): Congress, I second Motion 256. In support of this motion I will give you a little bit of information regarding these illegal loan sharks. According to the Debt Collecting Council, a charity, in December 2012, it stated that the number of people seeking help with payday loans had increased by almost 300% in the past two years. Citizens Advice also said that the number of clients with debts, including payday loans had arisen from 1% in the first quarter of 2009-10 to 10% in the same period in 2012. Research has also shown that on in three of these people who have taken out a payday loan could not afford to pay off the first loan so had to take out a second and then another one, and so the situation just escalated.

The Office of Fair Trading also wrote to payday lenders last November warning them about their inadequate affordability checks and aggressive debt-collection practices. Let’s not forget Lord Beecroft who also benefits from Wonga’s success, as he is chairman of Dawn Capital, which has a large stake in the Wonga Group. Recent accounts for Wonga show that their net profit more than tripled from £12.4 million in 2010 to £48.8 million, with revenues climbing to £184 million in just two years. The generous Beecroft has donated over half-a-million pounds to the Tory Party since Cameron became leader. Obviously, this was paid by other people’s misery.

Congress, advertising little old lady puppets knitting and old men puppets on skateboards giving a homely feel is wrong. The stark reality is that people are drawn in and get themselves into serious debt. Please support this motion and get some action regarding the way that these companies are allowed to advertise. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Does anyone wish to contribute on Wonga Wonga?

SIS. A. MURPHY (North West & Irish): Congress, I am speaking in support of Motion 256 – Call for an end to enticing loan company advertising.

Colleagues, these companies such as Wonga and QuidQuick etc are evil. They draw you in with their bright adverts and ease of getting signed up, signed up to loan rates of upwards of 4,000%! You might not realise it, but we have a wonderful alternative. It is called Thorne Credit Union.

*(Applause)* It is run by your own GMB members, set up to help you get loans at reasonable rates. We don't rip you off. We are not fat-cat bankers, just ordinary men and women from the GMB here to help you with an alternative to payday loans. Please support.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Angela. Congress, let me put Motion 256 to the vote. We are supporting. All those in favour of getting rid of Wonga Wonga? Anyone against.

*Motion 256 was CARRIED.*

## **SOCIAL POLICY**

### **GENERAL**

### **CULLING OF BADGERS**

#### **MOTION 267**

#### **267. CULLING OF BADGERS**

This Congress deplores the culling of badgers as a supposed means of the control of bovine TB and believes that more effort should be placed in securing a vaccination programme.

LEICESTERSHIRE 2000 BRANCH  
*Midland & East Coast Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. L. GUBB (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I move Motion 267 – Culling of Badgers. President, the UK is required by EU laws to have an accelerated bovine TB eradication plan fulfilling specified criteria. During 2012 the European Commission granted the UK up to Euros 31.2 million of funding from the EU Veterinary Fund towards its bovine TB-eradication plan. This money will contribute towards the cost of testing cattle and compensation to the rich farmers. Nowhere does it say “murder all badgers”. How then, after 10 years of scientific research and years of ministerial dithering, does the Government decide it is time to cull the badgers to prevent them from spreading bovine TB, when in March Defra licensed a vaccine programme? From 2010 to 2012 they funded a vaccination programme. Why didn't it continue?

European badgers are not classified as an endangered species but they are among the most legally protected wild animal in the UK. These beautiful animals are to be slaughtered by individuals with a licence which they gain after doing a supposed-Government training course. The marksmen are instructed to shoot the animals in the heart/lung area, not the head. Obviously, the badger is not going to stay still while a marksman pins a target on to get a clean kill.

The Government have also said that an observer must be present during such culls to record the following: how much noise does the badger make as it dies, and how long does it take to die? Then there is to be a post mortem to see if the badger had TB and if it was shot in the right place. What about the badgers that they merely wound and crawl away to die a lingering death due to infection and starvation? Defra says: “As with most vaccines, the vaccine against TB in cattle will not guarantee that vaccinated animals are fully protected. Some vaccinated may still contract the disease, but vaccination can reduce the risk of infection and transmission. Vaccination of cattle against TB in conjunction with the existing TB control measures could also reduce the severity of a herd breakdown, regardless of whether infection is introduced by wildlife or cattle.” All information points to the badgers being the bad buys, but one word proves that they are innocent, and that “bovine”. Look it up in the dictionary if you are unsure what it means because I think you will find that it is to do with cattle.

Cattle pass bovine TB on to badgers. As with most diseases, if it is not wiped out at source, it will spread. We know that this Government do not listen to the majority. They also don't listen to their fellow MPs. Last year MPs voted and rejected the idea of culling badgers by 5 to 1 in a non-binding

vote. Today, however, in Parliament the Labour Party raised this subject of culling badgers, which they are against, and I heard just before I came up to speak that they lost the vote.

If this goes ahead, five thousand badgers will die this year and up to a hundred thousand in the next four years. We need to get the vaccination programme up and running not only for badgers but also for cattle to stop cross-contamination. We know that this Government doesn't care about people so I suppose it was being a bit optimistic to expect them to care about the wildlife and eco system of this country. They want a cheap, quick fix as usual.

Let me leave you with this thought. What's black, white and red all over? A dying badger. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Seconder?

SIS. D. MILLS (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I second Motion 267. The intended cull of badgers which was due to start in two selected areas in Britain on 1<sup>st</sup> June is a barbaric, unscientific and nonsensical attempt to control bovine TB. Far from reducing the TB, there is a strong possibility that infected animals will disperse over a wider area, thus spreading the disease. Also, because of the inadequate information on badger populations, there is a very real fear that in some parts of the country that badgers could be exterminated. I am no expert on this matter but I would like to quote Professor John Bourne, who led the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB. He stated: "The planned cull is likely to increase the incident of bovine TB and, therefore, there should be much greater emphasis on cattle-farming controls." He states that the cattle controls in operation are totally ineffective, partly because the TB test in operation for cattle is not accurate, causing tests in herds often to show negative results while still harbouring the disease.

Referring to the Group's final report: "We further argue that whilst the cattle can get TB from badgers, the true problem is the other way round. Badger infections are following not leading the TB."

England should follow the example of Wales, which has embarked upon a programme of vaccination of badgers, turning their back on the target-practice approach of the Government. I feel very sad. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dorothy.

*(Two delegates dressed as badgers entered the hall) (Cheers and applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I understand that somebody wants to speak.

BILLY THE BADGER: President and Congress, fellow badgers, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause, cheers and table thumping)* My name is Billy the Badger. This *here* is my wife. We are here speaking on behalf of the Bristol badgers. We walked all the way from Bristol to be here today. We had a terrible time crossing the M5. It's lucky we're here at all. We are supposed to be nocturnal. I'm a bit nervous as I seem to be the only one here with no clothes on. *(Laughter)*

I am a badger of few words – that's marriage for you – so I will get to the point. My wife and I and our eight cubs would be bloody furious if you don't support this motion. You can't cull us. We are generally mellow badgers – that's GMB to you lot. *(Applause)* There are so few dangerous badgers that you could count them on one hand – well, four. I told my wife that this cull idea is a pile of manure. She said, "You've got to use a polite word like 'fertiliser' in front of all you lovely people."

I said, “It’ll be lucky if I even remember to say ‘manure’.” So save the badgers. Support this motion. We’re off home now, and don’t forget vaccinate, vaccinate and vaccinate. Goodbye.

*(Applause and cheers)*

BRO. P. BOYLAN (North West & Irish): Congress, I won’t, probably, be very popular after this. Motion 267 recognises that badgers carry TB. It also places a need for a vaccination programme. We in the GMB have members in Ireland whose job it is to cull badgers. No disrespect to the badgers, but the farmers have suffered enough. Colleagues, the people who carry out the culling will tell you that every badger should be awarded an OBE – it’s quick and painless – bang! *(Calls of “Boo”)*

THE PRESIDENT: You’ve just lost a million votes by that last statement.

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): Congress, I am speaking in support of Motion 267. *(Applause)* Congress, this is the very short version of the speech that I wanted to make. I have now learnt that if you intend to join the debate don’t leave your speech in your hotel room just because you think the motion is due to be called tomorrow.

In brief, those who know me are aware of the contempt, disdain and abhorrence etched deep on to my soul for Margaret Thatcher. They know that I blame the bitch for every evil inflicted on this country and working-class people since she entered politics, but even they would be surprised to hear that I also blame Thatch for this evil badger cull. The fact is – here is where it is going to be really good, but it’s back in my hotel room – that Thatcher abolished the Milk Marketing Board. This allows supermarkets to dictate the price they will pay for milk, and they want to keep that price as low as possible. So farmers have to produce more milk to make profit. They’ve swapped to breeds which have a higher yield but lower resistance to TB. So, there you go. It’s Thatcher’s fault. *(Applause)* Many species of British wildlife are in decline. Do we really to blast to death an animal which is protected just to buy cheap milk? What’s wrong with a vaccination programme? Congress, I urge you to support the motion and join me in stamping on Thatcher’s decomposing hand as it reaches from the grave to slaughter these beautiful creatures. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Alison, you never leave a speech in your hotel room. You carry it everywhere. Does anyone else wish to contribute? *(No response)* Does the mover want the right to reply?

SIS. L. GUBB (Midland & East Coast): The gentleman, if I can call him that! *(Cries of anguish)*

Your friend might like going out shooting badgers for fun. You say it is a job. If it was done humanely, that is a different matter. These people are taking shots at badgers, not as before in trials where the badger was caught in a trap and was then shot. It was a clean shot to the head. Why the Government have decided on the heart/lung area rather than the head, I don’t know. As I said before, the badgers aren’t going to stand around and wait for you to take aim.

My son-in-law has got a shotgun. My grand-daughter belongs to a shooting club at the age of eight. Even though they are very good shots, even they wouldn’t be able to hit a badger and definitely say that it’s going to be an instant kill. It’s slaughter. We’ve had it in the past with the seals in Canada. Do we want to stand by and watch this. As it stands, cattle with TB do not affect human beings unless you drink your milk straight from the farm without it being pasteurised and you eat your meat raw, because once it’s been cooked, any chance of it being passed on to a human being has gone. This is all about profit. A lot of this came about after the Foot & Mouth disease. We’d nearly eradicated TB within the farming industry, and in Scotland they have. Farmers re-stocked with animals that weren’t adequately tested, and that’s why the increase in bovine TB has happened since

2001. The Government have known this. They have had over 10 years. They've had a vaccine for over 10 years. Why haven't they used it? If you go on the web page of Defra you will see all this. They just talk themselves silly. It's a load of rubbish. There is no need for the killing. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: After that exciting debate, which we thought would be boring, I will put Motion 267 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? Next year we have ban-the-gun lobby.

*Motion 267 was CARRIED.*

MRS. BADGER: Thanks on behalf of all the badgers. I would like to say a massive "thank you". *(Applause)*

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, this is a final reminder for delegates to pick up your Congress gift T-shirt from the Ethical Threads stand in the Exhibition Hall.

I look forward seeing you all tonight at my night, which is the President's Night, which will be held in the Holiday Inn. Doors open at 8 pm. Details are on the screen. Just to remind you, there will be no food available at the Night.

Can I say a big thank you to British Gas and FuturePlus, joint sponsors of the President's Night. Thank you. Have a great evening. I will see you all later. *(Applause)*

*Congress adjourned*