

**GMB
CONGRESS 2023**

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

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**Held in:
The Brighton Centre,
Brighton**

on:

**Sunday, 4th June 2023
Monday, 5th June 2023
Tuesday, 6th June 2023
Wednesday, 7th June 2023
-and-
Thursday, 8th June 2023**

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**PROCEEDINGS
DAY FIVE**

(Thursday, 8th June 2023)

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FIFTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 8TH JUNE 2023

MORNING SESSION

(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, can I call Congress to order, please? Thank you. We are nearly there!

I have just a few announcements before I take the Standing Orders Committee Report. Many of you will know Kathleen Walker-Shaw who is watching, I hope, this morning, she has been watching all week, she sends us her love and, Kathleen, we send our love back to you as well. *(Applause)*

Adrian Blackburn, North East, Yorkshire, & Humber Region, a little bird has told me it is your 60th birthday today. I hope you do not mind me telling everyone how old you are. *(Applause)* We wish you a very happy birthday. And anyone else who has had a birthday and I have not said it, I hope you have had a good time and thank you for spending your birthday with your GMB family.

I now invite Karen Dudley to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 6.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 6

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Withdrawn motions. Congress, this is to confirm that three motions were withdrawn from the floor yesterday by Midlands Region. They were Motion 36, Membership Subscription Rates, Motion 38, Review of Grade 2 GMB Union Rates, Motion 62, Mental Health Training.

Bucket collections: North West & Irish Region, you have won the Diversity in the Bucket Award. *(Applause)* The amount collected yesterday by North West & Irish Region for Zoe's Place, Liverpool, and Angel Eyes, Northern Ireland, was £558.23. *(Applause)* There is more! Plus 100 Filipino pesos, £10 Bank of Scotland, £10 Bank of Ireland, a Simpsons sweetie, and probably more important an IOU signed by Gary Smith. *(Applause)*

President, Congress, I formally move the adoption of SOC Report No.6. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. I presume there is no opposition so can we go to the vote? Okay, come on.

CINDY GAVIN (North East, Yorkshire, & Humber): We are rejecting the SOC Report No.6 basically because our Emergency Motion we put in this morning for access and privacy at Congress has been rejected. Madam President, am I allowed to just state the overall motion?

THE PRESIDENT: No. No.

CINDY GAVIN (North East, Yorkshire, & Humber): We are not allowed to. Okay, it is just around the confusion of voting and we think it should be a bit more accessible. We all know the issues that we have had, especially for our new delegates. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cindy. Karen, do you want to reply?

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress, the reason the Emergency Motion was rejected was because it did not meet the criteria set out. Yes, it happened after the closing date for normal motions to be submitted but there was nothing that we could do as an emergency to rectify it. The SOC, myself as Chair, and Barry as my adviser, have taken this to our briefing meeting, to the Congress Office, for things to change in future, but there is nothing that we can do for this particular Congress, hence why the Emergency Motion was rejected.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen, for that explanation. I will put the SOC Report No.6 to the vote. All those in favour please show? Thank you. All those against? That is still carried. Thank you.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE CHAIR CONGRESS 2023

8 JUNE 2023

SOC REPORT NO 6

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS

KAREN DUDLEY, STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MOVING SOC REPORT NO 6.

WITHDRAWN MOTIONS

CONGRESS, THIS IS TO CONFIRM THAT THREE MOTIONS WERE WITHDRAWN FROM THE FLOOR YESTERDAY BY MIDLANDS REGION. THEY WERE
MOTION 36 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES
MOTION 38 REVIEW OF GRADE 2 GMB UNION RATES
MOTION 62 MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

BUCKET COLLECTIONS

THE AMOUNT COLLECTED YESTERDAY BY NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION FOR ZOES PLACE, LIVERPOOL, AND ANGEL EYES, NORTHERN IRELAND, WAS
£558.23 GBP
PLUS
100 PISO
£10 BANK OF SCOTLAND
£10 BANK OF IRELAND
A SIMPSONS SWEETIE
AND AN IOU SIGNED BY GARY SMTH

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, I FORMALLY MOVE ADOPTION OF SOC REPORT NO 6.

NOTE TO DELEGATES

SOC REPORT NO 6 WAS ADOPTED BY CONGRESS

*Standing Orders Committee Report No.6 was **ADOPTED.***

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we move on to our first international speaker this morning and it gives me great pleasure to invite Christopher Siu-tat Mung to the stage to speak to Congress. Christopher was the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions until it was forcibly dissolved. Forced to exile in the UK, Christopher cofounded the Hong Kong Labour Rights Monitor, which keeps the voice of Hong Kong workers heard by the International Trade Union Movement. Congress, please give a warm GMB welcome and our solidarity to Christopher Siu-tat Mung. (*Applause*)

**CHRISTOPHER SIU-TAT MUNG OF THE HONG KONG LABOUR RIGHTS MONITOR
ADDRESSED CONGRESS**

CHRISTOPHER SIU-TAT MUNG: Thank you very much. Dear sisters and brothers of GMB, dear comrades of the International Labour Movement. I am very grateful to GMB for inviting me to attend this Congress and having me to share with you about a grave situation of the Hong Kong Labour Movement. As a Hong Kong trade unionist in exile I feel a responsibility to come here to speak out the truth that the Hong Kong people on the ground cannot speak. As everyone knows, in China the workers cannot organise their own trade unions and ordinary trade unions must be subordinate to the official federation retained by the Chinese Communist Party until everything changes.

Hong Kong was the only place where the free trade unions can be established and for the democratic and independent labour movement that has been my lifelong mission. I have committed myself into the labour movement for 26 years before I left Hong Kong. Thirty-three years ago HKCTU (Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions) was set up as the only independent and democratic workers federation in Hong Kong and even in China, defending the significant breakthrough of returning the power of the trade union to the workers. However, today I sadly tell you that our confederation cannot exist any more under the intensive political attacks. Our mission has experienced great frustration. Although our confederation is now dissolved, however, I strongly believe that our spirit fighting for workers' liberty and democracy will never die. (*Applause*)

Over the past three decades we have not only defended the workers' rights but also fighting for the democracy and freedom under a totalitarian state. We are the only workers' federation to speak out for the human rights appeals, fighting for universal suffrage, and commemorating the June 4 massacre every year. As the Anti-Extradition Movement 2019 we took to the

streets with the Hong Kong people together, gathering one million/two million people in the rallies, and launched their political strike with nothing more than 300,000 people fighting for democracy and freedom despite facing the repressive regime.

We have no regret in our pursuit of democracy, democracy which is the soul of the labour movement and only democracy can defend truly the position of the working class. (*Applause*) I have led an introduction of the National Security Law 2020 fighting for democracy that was condemned as subversion of state power. With our links with the International Labour Movement we are accused of collusion with a foreign force. Our General Secretary, Lee Cheuk Yan, and our Chairperson Carol Ng, were charged against the national security law. They have been in prison for more than 12 months and even today some of our core members were taken away by the national security police for investigation again and again. I was myself interviewed by the Chinese government agents three times in a month before I left Hong Kong. They questioned me about our financial source and our links with foreign organisations and the risk of arrest became increasingly imminent. I was forced to leave Hong Kong and am back on the road of exile. Until today more than 250 people were arrested under the crime of endangering national security, most of them are leaders of a democratic movement giving empathy, human rights defenders, trade unionists, they have done nothing to endanger the national security but to exercise their basic right and freedom inside the law. Who is breaking the law, who is endangering the country, who is putting the people at risk, that is not us, that is the dictatorship. (*Applause*)

Besides facing such repressive cutbacks the people on the ground have had enough and even those in prison will not surrender to the power. As our General Secretary spoke loudly in the court and he insisted that fighting for democracy is not a crime. On June 4, on the past June 4, our General Secretary used to march and went on hunger strike in prison to mourn the victims of the June 4 massacre.

Although the HKFTU was dissolved, some of our former affiliate unions are still making the effort to survive today. They have to be very cautious not to fall into any traps set up by the authority. They are lacking resource and manpower given by the umbrella organisations. Nevertheless, they are still struggling every day to be the only voice of the independent union. Some of the labour members have also shown their courage by trying to organise a 1st May and Labour Day rally this year. At the end they were threatened by

the national security police to cancel their rally. However, their courage has set a light on the dark for the people who are suffering from the dictatorship.

At the May Day statement the labour activists were saying that living under the dictatorship the most important thing is not to obey in advance under the threat of national security law. However, it is almost impossible for the people on the ground to speak out the truth to the outside world. The Chinese government intends to isolate the labour movement by cutting off international concerns and support from outside. Therefore, some of the Hong Kong trade unionists living in exile decided to form the Hong Kong Labour Right Monitor based in UK hoping to bring the Hong Kong workers' voice to the international community and seek the international support for our brothers and sisters who are still fighting every day on the ground.

In fact, the Chinese government is not only destroying Hong Kong but also it is mocking the models of worker exploitation and human rights protection of other countries threatening safety and democracy at the regional and global level. Unfortunately, the intention is to exploit the human rights depression of the Chinese government, putting the interests of trading and economy over the people with their ongoing struggle between the democracy and totalitarianism. Today, we are surrounded by the authoritarian dictators globally from China, Russia, Belarus, Cambodia, and to many, many others. They are supporting each other. They are extending their influence over different international organisations. It is time for the international labour movement to get united and fight back together. *(Applause)*

With your support we will continue our struggle until we win the democracy and freedom the Hong Kong people deserve. Be sure to believe that. One day our independent and democratic federation can be repealed again in Hong Kong. No one knows when the days will come. However, one thing is for sure, the values that we are holding will live longer than the ones of the dictatorship. As the slogan on the T-shirt I am wearing says (sorry, it is in Chinese) constant dropping can wear away a stone. Workers united. We will never be defeated. Workers united. We will never be defeated. Thank you very much. *(Standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: What a powerful way to start this morning and, as we know, solidarity has no boundaries and that is why it is so important that we have those links with our international brothers and sisters, and that last quote, the values we hold will live longer than those of the dictator. I think that is really important message, our values will outlast everyone else's.

POLITICAL: IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 4, Political: Immigration & Migration. Can I have the movers and seconders of Motions 178 and 182, down to the front, please.

IMMIGRATION AND SOLIDARITY

MOTION 178

178. IMMIGRATION AND SOLIDARITY

Congress notes the appointment of Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister and the re-appointment of Suella Braverman as Home Secretary with responsibility for immigration and Border Force.

Congress believes that the Tory immigration policy is cruel and illegal. GMB believes in an immigration policy that enables legal routes to enter and stay in the country, that recognises the right to work, a right of family reunification and uncompromising support for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

Congress notes and confirms Labour Conference Composites 20/2019 and Composite 14/2021 on immigration, asylum seekers and refugees. <https://bit.ly/lab19immigration> and <https://bit.ly/lab21immigration>

Congress resolves to express our complete opposition to the immoral Rwanda scheme and opposition to the 'hostile environment'.

Congress calls on the Labour Party to state its opposition to the hostile environment,

Congress calls on the next Labour Government to repeal the Nationality and Borders Act and all measures that criminalise migration or living in the UK as a migrant.

Congress calls on GMB sponsored councillors to campaign to declare their authorities as Cities of Sanctuary, or similar alternatives. <https://cityofsanctuary.org/>

Congress resolves that the GMB will support those workers and unions taking industrial action to disrupt the Rwanda deportations and the hostile environment.

Congress instructs the GMB delegations to Labour's NPF, annual conference, Clause V meeting and the NEC together with GMB sponsored MPs and PPCs to campaign for and vote for these policies.

X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH

LONDON

(Carried)

DAVE LEVY (London): Morning, everybody. That is a hard act to follow. We note the progressive policies on immigration adopted by successive Labour conferences and contrast them with the cruel and racist policies pursued by this Government. This motion calls for legal routes to be made available for people to come here to work, to live with their families, and to seek safety from death, injury and war. For workers the Tories have replaced the skills requirement with an earnings limit, a gambit informed by the motto, even

knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing, it also ignores the fact that we need other skilled workers to come here too.

If I had attended yesterday's London Region fringe, Rights for All, Organising and Supporting Migrant Workers before writing this motion, I would have focused less on the economics and more on the people, but one of the purposes of this motion was to challenge the canard that migrants are an economic burden. It was not true in 2016 and it is not true today. After Tuesday's debate where it was raised, I checked the University of Oxford's migration observatory which states there was a reduction in wages amongst the lowest 5% of around a halfpenny a year. I had to check that twice because it is somewhat trivial.

There are poor rights on bringing family members to the UK. There is an excessive desire to identify bogus marriages, a concept introduced by a Labour government. I am sure others in this hall have sadder stories than I but I have at least one friend denied a marriage at the registry office even after they had turned up, and for refugees who have the disgrace of the detention centres and the Calais camps and topping it off with a wholly reprehensible and illegal Rwanda scheme, the conditions in these systems in the detention centres and in the Calais camps are inhumane and dangerous. Once someone is here we also have the hostile environment making it hard to live in the UK, with restrictions to rights to work, the banks, the rent, the seeking access to healthcare, impacting both adults and children alike, and imposing massive citizen costs and charges, and nationalisation fees.

We must campaign in our homes, in our streets, in our workplaces, supporting campaigns to protect migrants and workers that refuse to push back boats or work on deportation sites. We need to build an immigration system based on compassion and dignity. Labour must differentiate itself from the Tories on the grounds of compassion, not competence. We must recognise our duty to behave with decency to other human beings.

The CEC is proposing support with qualification and the short answer is that we agree the qualification. The qualification comes in three parts and some are easier to agree with than others. The CEC ask that we recognise any action must be member led and obviously legal, and that is fine. I will be more careful next time I draft something. They also argue that the sad reality of past policy on free movement of workers has allowed workers to be widely exploited, using devices to undercut wages and conditions. We do not agree. It is the view of the mover of this motion that the current immigration

system which ties workers to jobs inhibits the ability to join unions and fight for their rights. Again, the stories of corruption and cruelty referred to yesterday in the organising migrants session are in the face of the truth of this. Low wages are not caused by migrants, they are the result of weak unions and a poorly enforced minimum wage and health and safety laws. It has also been suggested that this challenges aspects of the qualification which is based on existing policy, the same as the five year old 2018 Brexit paper, then we should bring a motion on this topic and if my branch members agree we will do this.

The final aspect of the qualification is that again the CEC wishes to reserve a right to negotiate our policy inside the Labour Party's decision-making process. The motions are of importance to our members at Congress, to see them passed and make changes in our workplace, our union, and our country. It is disappointing to be told that our motion will only be supported if we are prepared to see it given away to satisfy another organisation. We do not expect this to be given away. Flexibility is fine. Submission is not. I move. Thank you, Barbara. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Secunder? Can I make sure I have the movers and seconders of Motion 182 and also I will call the movers and seconders of Composite 17, Motion 261, and Motion 263. Thank you.

JOE DHARAMPAL-HORNBY (London): My Mum arrived from India as a child in the 1960s seeking to build a new life in the UK. Supported by her parents, friends, and neighbours in London, and inspiring teachers, she made it to university and now works in our NHS. Last week, however, my Mum experienced the other side of the NHS when she was knocked down by a cyclist hurtling down the pavement in Brixton. Immediately strangers rushed to help, calling an ambulance and delivering first aid. Thankfully, my Mum escaped serious injury and during our 8-hour wait in A&E the impact of immigration on our NHS is clear. Without the wonderful paramedics, nurses, doctors, and porters, many of whom came from abroad, our wait would have been much, much longer. Immigrants are not destroying our NHS, or any other public service, it is significant Tory cuts and mismanagement, and despite the current UK struggles we remain a place of hope to so many, from Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russia's illegal invasion to Hong Kong residents escaping a crackdown on human rights, but elsewhere the Government is closing safe and legal routes to refugees, a moral and legal failure. They continue to blame immigrants and refugees at every turn to distract from their own catastrophic failures. We are GMB because we are stronger together. We believe in a Britain where people from all communities can

come to each other's aid, a Britain which recognises migrants' contribution to our economy, public services, and society, and a Britain which supports refugees fleeing war and persecution. Therefore, Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joe. The mover of Motion 182?

SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY WITH MIGRANT WORKERS MOTION 182

182. SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY WITH MIGRANT WORKERS

This Congress believes it is crucially important that the GMB support in as many ways possible migrant workers coming to live in the UK. GMB must also continue to support and organise activities to assist the estimated 100,000 Ukrainians who are currently living in Britain and who are experiencing many difficult issues and circumstances.

GMB will resolve to:

1. Assist the Ukrainian people and other migrant workers living in the UK who are here to protect themselves and their families from persecution poverty and war by recruiting them into the GMB and by organising and assisting them with employment problems.
2. To signpost agencies that offer advice and guidance to help them find suitable accommodation through local Councils and other agencies who are in a position and able to provide suitable accommodation for them and their families.
3. GMB will work with the Migrant Worker communities, education providers and other local agencies in terms of enabling informal and formal English language courses to be set up and delivered free of charge for migrant workers whilst living in the UK.
4. That we resolve to provide sign posting and advice for migrant workers in how to raise funds for them to self-organise within the wider community.

S37 SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH

SOUTHERN

(*Carried*)

LARA JOHNSON (Southern): First-time delegate, second time speaker. (*Applause*) I am privileged to address you as the great, great daughter of a Jewish refugee who settled in the East End and he worked around Petticoat Lane in the rag trade, and were it not for their struggles to escape the problems I would not be standing here today. There is no trace left of our family. He did not come out of Poland. My great grandparents worked their way out of poverty, they made their life here and through hard graft they created my future.

As we have all been hearing for decades the Conservative Party keeps pledging to reduce the UK net migration. Last year UK net migration hit a record of 606,000 but this is one commitment we should be thanking the Tories for breaking. They have broken it so well that when they pledged to remove net migration in 2019 it stood at just 226,000. In March 2023, employment vacancies stood at 1.1 million and the only reason that figure is reducing was economic pressures cited as holding back recruitment.

The Conservatives' failure to open our eyes to the benefits to the UK as being an open and welcoming place to work for all migrants is literally holding us all back, economically but also morally. Border control is a fairy tale. The reality is that undocumented migrants, up to 1.2 million people based on recent estimates, make up a total of our society and they are forced to live on the margins of that society with no clear or affordable way to regularise their status. Their children born here in the UK have no birthright citizenship.

At some point some government is going to have to address this but until they do we at GMB must ensure we equip all our activists with the resources we need to support migrants to this country, to show them that membership of this great union is not just insurance against employment issues but part of an intimate community where our branches and their members are empowered and ready to help migrants organise, and support them as they attempt to navigate a system not broken but working as designed, which is not welcoming and open but instead leaves the majority with no recourse to public funds. We need to fight for the progress shown in welcoming refugees from Ukraine to be extended to all migrants in conflict zones, and beyond, because this country benefits from migration and if GMB lead the way on this then we can build a future of freedom and prosperity to be proud of.

Please support this motion and commit to securing the future of those who have made the UK their home. Please also take this challenge back into your workplaces, your branches, and your communities, that those of us who have birthright citizenship or settled status will work as one to achieve this for all. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Lara. Secunder?

BOB LOVELL (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* We all live in a diverse society where many members of our communities are from different countries. While many individuals migrate out of choice, many leave home out of necessity. I myself have an adopted son who came to England from Ethiopia when he was 14 years old arriving in the back of a truck

fleeing persecution, and the fear of being killed. He now works and contributes to society. Migrants contribute hugely to our economy and our vital services we rely on to keep our country running. The UK relies on approximately 79,000 migrant seasonal workers to just harvest crops used by our current domestic agricultural system and without them our farmers' crops will rot in the fields and the higher prices will then move up the supply chain and ultimately to the consumer.

Congress, we must stand together, recruit, organise the bus drivers, the nurses, the postal workers, and the teachers, just to mention a few, no matter what country they come from or for what reason they came to this country. Our union and our communities are powerful when they come together and organise and it is time we said enough to the demonization of immigrant workers by the Government and by the press. We as a union must support migrant workers whether they are Ukrainians fleeing war and persecution or those from other parts of the world looking for safety and a better life for them and their families. We must continue to support, recruit, and organise, for a better tomorrow. United we are stronger. Solidarity. I second.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bob, that is really hard to be the first-time speaker and have to wait right to the end of Congress. Well done. Does anyone wish to speak against? No? Can I then ask Dean Gilligan to respond on behalf of the CEC, please?

DEAN GILLIAN (CEC): The CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 178, Immigration and Solidarity with qualifications. Most of this motion is in line with existing policy. GMB is uncompromising in our support for rights of refugees and asylum seekers. GMB condemns the hostile environment and other cruelly immoral policies of this Tory government, such as the Rwanda deportation programme, which is racist and breaches UK's international duties.

The CEC's first qualification is to address the industrial implications for GMB members if this motion was to be carried as it currently stands. Motion 178 calls on Congress to note and confirm two motions to previous Labour Party conferences but it does not refer to what those motions propose. One of those proposals is to close all immigration detention centres. This will include places where GMB members work. Congress, it would simply not be appropriate for us in this hall to call for the closure of any of our members' places of work without those calls coming from our members in the industry

itself. Doing so would harm our ability to represent our members and improve standards for everyone at those sites.

The CEC's qualification, therefore, is that supporting Motion 178 should not cut across the longstanding principle that industrial questions, the voices of our members in those sectors, should be heard the loudest.

Another proposal in those external motions is to maintain and extend free movement rights which have since been repealed by Tory Brexit legislation. The CEC's qualification is to reinstate existing Congress policy that without checks and protections to counter the exploitation and undercutting reported by our members of various sectors we cannot endorse calls for an extension of free movement.

GMB is committed to seeking the repeal of the Tories' oppressive immigration system and our policy is to support a fair movement of labour as carried by Congress 2019.

Finally, the CEC wishes to qualify that the approach which GMB delegations take to Labour Party conferences and other policymaking bodies are a matter for the relevant CEC sub-committees and those delegations themselves to determine. This is in line with longstanding practice. The CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 182, support solidarity with migrant workers with a qualification. The CEC welcomes this motion. GMB is committed to taking action to address migrant workers' concerns in the UK and to defend and strengthen their rights. Our qualification is that GMB does not hold the necessary expertise to provide professional immigration advice and services. However, we can work with and signpost two services that can offer such support.

The CEC also supports the call for GMB to recruit and organise Ukrainian workers, and other migrant workers, into the union. Our qualification is that in doing so we should follow the good practice of our regions and GMB@Work organising principles in this area of our work.

Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 178 and 182 with the qualifications that have been set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dean. Just to confirm, then, London Region, do you agree to the qualification on Motion 178? (*Agreed*) Thank you. And Southern Region on Motion 182? (*Agreed*) Yes; thank you. I can put both of those to

the vote. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against?
Motions 178 and 182 are both carried.

*Motion 178 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 182 was **CARRIED**.*

INTERNATIONAL

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 5, International, and can we have the mover of Composite Motion 17, please?

UKRAINE HAS RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AND TO CALL FOR AND EXPECT HELP FROM THE UK GOVERNMENT

COMPOSITE 17

(Covering Motions 259 and 260)

259 – Ukraine – GMB Scotland

260 – Ukraine has right to defend itself and to call for and expect help from the UK Government – London Region

C17. UKRAINE HAS RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AND TO CALL FOR AND EXPECT HELP FROM THE UK GOVERNMENT

This Congress condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine of February 2022, launched from Russia, Belarus and Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory.

Ukraine has already paid a huge and terrible price in lives lost, cities and towns destroyed and its economy wrecked by the Russian invasion and bombardment.

We salute the resistance of the Ukrainian people and its labour movement to this act of imperialist aggression. We are for the victory of Ukraine and the defeat of Russia in this war

We support Ukraine's right to appeal for, and be provided with, the military equipment and weaponry needed to defeat the invasion.

This Congress is very clear that the democratically elected government in Ukraine is fully entitled to resist the Russian attacks on its territory and is also fully entitled to secure defence equipment, arms and weapons from across the world to aid that defence.

Ukraine is also fully entitled to seek to import the most modern and technologically advanced weapons systems from across the world to resist the attacks and regain its territory.

We therefore condemn Western governments for their failure to supply sufficient weaponry to do so.

Congress considers that Governments in the UK and other nations with advanced defence manufacturing industries have a duty to respond positively with the weapons Ukraine needs to defend itself.

Congress considers that claims that such a response from the UK Government is the equivalent of war mongering, will prolong the war or risk the escalation of war with Russia are in fact back door arguments to leave Ukraine fend for itself and to face the forced annexation of large parts of its territory. Dressing up these claims with calls for peace talks does not change the fact that the policy they embody is actually acquiescence in the face of the Russian attack and an appeasement of it.

We extend our solidarity to Ukrainian trade unionists and socialists who continue to promote and defend workers' rights even in the midst of war. Defence of Ukraine against Russian aggression cannot be at the expense of workers' rights and self-organisation.

We are for the speediest possible end to the war, based on: withdrawal of all Russian forces; respect for, and restoration of, the territorial integrity of Ukraine; approval of any 'peace deal' by the people of Ukraine and its labour movement.

We support a post-war socially progressive reconstruction of Ukraine, with trade unions and civil society playing a central role in defining its nature and priorities. We therefore support the cancellation of Ukraine's foreign debt.

We support the restoration of peaceful relations between Ukraine and neighbouring countries. We therefore look forward to, and pledge our support for, popular democratic uprisings to overthrow the authoritarian and anti-working-class regimes of Putin and Lukashenka in Russia and Belarus.

We welcome the condemnation of the Russian invasion, the support for civil and workers' rights in Russia and Belarus, and the call for direct links with Ukrainian trade unions, which have been contained in statements on Ukraine issued by the GMB CEC over the past twelve months.

A terrible war of attrition is underway. Congress is clear that the UK Government- be it Tory or Labour- should continue to respond positively to the requests from Ukraine for weapons, training and financial support to defend itself and its territory. Congress further supports sanctions on Russia for launching this terrible war.

Following on from the above, we therefore call on all levels of the GMB to:

- Campaign for increased arms supplies to Ukraine.
- Provide material support to, and build direct links with, Ukrainian trade unions.
- Where possible, provide material support to, and build direct links with, Russian and Belarusian trade unionists, workplace-activists, and human rights campaigners.
- Campaign against any attempts by Western governments to pressurise the people of Ukraine into acquiescing to an unacceptable 'peace deal'.
- Demand cancellation of Ukraine's foreign debt.
- Support the campaigning and collection of material assistance organised by local Ukrainian communities in the UK.

(Carried)

DENNIS RISVEGLI (London): Congress, Ukraine and the people of Ukraine have already paid a huge and terrible price in terms of life lost, cities and towns destroyed and an economy wrecked by the Russian invasion and artillery and aerial bombardment. A terrible war of attrition has now been under way over the last 15 months. It is true to say that without a next generation the Nlaws, the light anti-tank weapon, the Ukrainian military might not have stopped the initial assault by the invading Russian mass rank of tanks in February last year. If that tank assault had not been stopped the Russian forces would have taken Kyev and the democratically elected government would have been swept aside and Ukraine would now be run by the Russian invaders and a puppet dictatorship government. The UK Government was absolutely right to supply these weapons which are made in Belfast.

So far some 5,000 of these easy to carry, easy to use missiles have been sent to Ukraine. The Ukrainian people recognise the significance of the Nlaws, they adopted the old song, by the Levellers rock band, *I fought the law and the law won to, I fought with the Nlaw and the Nlaw won*, and it topped the music charts at this time. It is shocking to realise that there is a very small minority in the labour movement in the UK, and overseas, who severely

criticise this practical and effective military support by the UK Government for Ukraine. They classify it as warmongering and helping to prolong the war, and risking the escalation of the war. This motion calls on Congress and the supreme policy-making body in our organisation to totally reject such logic and disposition, and it calls on Congress to support the rights of the Ukrainian people and the government to repel and drive out the invading forces from the territories and to seek support from nations across the world with advanced modern weapons to do this. The region fully accepts the CEC qualification on nuclear weapons and we call on Congress to accept that nations like the UK and others with advanced defence industry have a duty to respond positively to supply Ukraine with the necessary weapons.

We also call for support of economic sanctions against Russia for starting this terrible war. Sanctions are a slow-burning economic weapon that has also been costly for consumers across the world, particularly the cost of oil and gas. However, they will have an impact over the coming period especially as so much modern weapon systems contain so many different types of advanced silicon chips which have now been denied to the Russian defence industry. The oil price cuts too have to cut down the amount of money available to the Putin regime to buy acquisitions from the Russian public.

Hopefully, Ukraine can drive out the invaders. The fortitude, bravery, and endurance of the Ukrainian people and armed forces should be saluted. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dennis. I think there was a bit of confusion about moving and seconding so I will give Scotland the same four minutes because they expected to move it. Okay.

CIORSTAIHD REICHE (GMB Scotland): Can I just start by saying that the Scottish note that you have, that will be very, very lucky! President, Congress, GMB Scotland doing something with Composite 17, Ukraine. Since February 2022, the people of Ukraine have been courageously defending their territory from an act of despotic aggression by Russia. That invasion has cost the people of Ukraine to have to flee their country leaving many, including civilians, behind to stay and fight in order to defend their land. In April of this year somewhere between 15,500 and 17,500 have lost their lives in this war. It has cost them emotionally with loss of loved ones and in some cases not even knowing what became of their family members. They have watched homes and cities ravished by a more advanced Russian military. They are fighting a war with what armament they have.

Congress, we support Ukraine's fight to appeal for and be supplied with more advanced military equipment and munitions, in order to defend against this oppressive invasion. War is horrific enough. Congress, I have personally witnessed this type of arbitrary conflict and desecration of human rights and without external assistance it does not end well. We would like to extend solidarity to trade unionists that remain to defend and support the rights of workers, even during the intimidation of war, fighting to uphold the rights of workers to organise. We should be building direct links with activists and human rights campaigners and join them in a campaign to halt any attempt by Western governments to drag in Ukraine into an unacceptable situation. Of course, Congress, we want an end to this conflict and we call for all Russian troops to withdraw from Ukrainian territory and we call for the condemnation of the Russian invasion. Ukraine should be able to recover, restore, and rebuild with the trade unions and the people of Ukraine fulfilling a pivotal role in this but this costs money and the country has been economically devastated by this invasion, only adding to what foreign debt it had already amassed. For this reason we call on the cancellation of all Ukraine's foreign debt.

We also support peaceful relations between Ukraine and neighbouring countries. We understand the importance for the building of links between them. We call for working with activists in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, to support both civil and workers' rights. Congress, we should be helping Ukraine defend and proudly rebuild their country. George Santayana said, *"Only the dead have seen the end of war."* Working together we can ensure this does not befall the people of Ukraine. Please vote in favour of this composite to protect Ukraine's democratically elected government and its people. We should not allow this to be their only legacy. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ciorstaidh, and my apologies for that confusion. Can I have the mover of Motion 261, please?

LESSONS ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICY FROM THE WAR IN UKRAINE MOTION 261

261. LESSONS ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICY FROM THE WAR IN UKRAINE

This Congress is very clear that the bedrock of the UK's national security and defence policy continues to be the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) which was set up by the Labour Government after the Second World War.

Congress welcomes the decision of the Swedish and Finnish Governments to apply for membership of NATO and looks forward to their accession as full members. They will bring important components to our collective security and defence.

The war in Ukraine has underlined the abiding importance of defence and security policies and the abiding requirements to maintain and properly equip adequate UK armed forces as an integral part of NATO.

An incoming Labour Government must make clear to the electorate it's unbreakable commitment to our national security and defences and to the maintenance of adequate levels of well trained and properly equipped armed forces.

Labour should commit to a new Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy when it comes into office. This should look to the lessons from the war in Ukraine on using modern drones, longer range missiles, real-time satellite imagery and cyber warfare and what this means for the equipment of the British Army. This should also look again at the size of the army and what the conflict has shown on the continuing role and relevance tanks and land warfare vehicles.

Congress calls for an upgrading of the army's land warfare capability including tanks, armoured personnel carriers and reconnaissance vehicles. The Challenger 11 tanks are over 20 years old, soon to be reduced to 148. The Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicles are over 26 years old. The Scimitar reconnaissance vehicle is over 50 years old. These require replacements with the most advanced equipment and capabilities.

New capabilities for the defence of vital offshore and undersea communications and energy infrastructures are required. Damage to these infrastructures would have devastating consequences for our security and way of life.

Congress concludes that there is no alternative for our security and defence to properly trained and equipped UK armed forces as part of NATO. This requires an ultra-modern high technology defence manufacturing industry in the UK to equip these armed forces.

Congress notes with satisfaction the leadership of GMB delegations in securing the adoption of this position at both the TUC Congress and Labour Party Conference in 2022 in the context of the war in Ukraine. Moves to diversify jobs away from defence manufacturing are neither sensible nor supportable as they undermine our vital national security and defences.

G57 GMB SOUTHALL BRANCH

LONDON

(Carried)

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): The Motion is Lessons on Defence and Security Policy from the war in Ukraine, it is not the essence of this motion but I just want to make clear that I stand with Ukraine because they are doing a good fight.

Today I come before you to address the matter most important to our national security and defence policy in the United Kingdom. As you all know, the bedrock of our national security and defence policy remain the North

Atlantic Treaty Organisation known as NATO. However, recent events in Ukraine have underlined the importance of modernising our defences and maintaining well equipped armed forces to ensure the safety of our country. The war in Ukraine has shown us the importance of modern technology such as drones, longer range missiles, real time satellite imagery, cyber warfare, and we must ensure that our armed forces are equipped with the most advanced and capable equipment to defend our country against potential threats. We call for an upgrade in the armed land warfare capability including tanks, armoured personnel carriers and reconnaissance vehicles. Some of our tanks, such as the Challenger 11, are 20 years old and will soon be reduced to only 148. The Warrior armoured fighting vehicles are over 26 years old and the Scimitar reconnaissance vehicle is over 50 years old. We must replace these vehicles with the latest technology to ensure the safety of our armed forces. Moreover, new capabilities are required to defend the vital offshore and undersea communications and energy infrastructures. Damage to these infrastructures would have devastating consequences to our security and way of life. Therefore, it is critical that we must invest in our defence manufacturing industry to equip our armed forces with the latest and most advanced technology. An incoming Labour government must make it clear to the electorate that their commitment to our national security and defence is unbreakable. Therefore, we must commit to a new integrated review of security, defence, development, and social policy, to ensure that our defence capabilities are modernised and equipped to face future challenges.

I call for an upgrade of our defence capabilities as well as the maintenance of adequate levels of well trained properly equipped armed forces, our membership in NATO together with the Swedish and Finnish governments' upcoming membership – I think one of them has joined by now – will contribute significantly to our collective security and defence. Please support this motion. I move. Victory to Ukraine. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Luke. Secunder?

BISMILLA MAHOMED (London): Congress, British troops are being supplied with unreliable equipment and the Ministry of Defence has failed to supply enough spare parts for armoured vehicles and helicopters. This is the finding from an influential committee of MPs, the Public Accounts Committee. They did find improvements in supplies of body armour and medical equipment to the front line. What good is body armour or a band aid if you are staring down the turret of a tank? However, this is nearly not good enough to protect

our soldiers on the battlefield. Please support our motion. I second.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bismilla. The mover of Motion 263, please?

**FOR PEACE
MOTION 263**

263. FOR PEACE

This Congress calls for a change of Union policy to drastically reduce rather than increase national expenditure on the manufacturing, deployment, and export of the means of war and mass destruction.

There should be a massive transfer of national resources away from warfare to welfare to support our underfunded public services including the NHS and to develop new green manufacturing industries to create proper employment for our members including those currently employed on the manufacture of armaments.

The risk of a new World War is now greater than ever and solutions to present and potential conflicts should be solved through diplomacy, conciliation and negotiation rather than military escalation.

GMB should campaign for an ethical foreign policy of peace and nuclear disarmament through the United Nations and not support the imperial delusions of the present British Government or the military maintenance of a world order which impoverishes billions of people.

C35 ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH

LONDON

(Withdrawn)

CATHY HOLLAND (London): Speaking without the support of the region. Before I read it out I agree with everything we are doing for Ukraine. We should help them as much as possible. These poor people; it is just awful.

This motion was given to me by the branch from our political officer, Sandra Smith, who has been a proud trade unionist for most of her 70 years. It would have been easy to have gone along with the status quo in respect of a proud trade unionist but I thought it was important to try. It was explained to me that we have many trade union members in the industry so it makes sense the reasoning to rule it out. Although the sentiments of the motion have merit, so does trying to make sure motions are fair for all. The sentiments of this motion in an ideal world is that we should have enough money for all but with hindsight we live in troubled times and helping our colleagues around the world has never been more important. This motion comes from a good place. We must all want a world without war and I am willing to withdraw this motion. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. Thank you. Thank you for saying you have withdrawn it from the stage. Then I can ask for speakers in opposition to Composite 17 on Motion 261.

JOSHUA BOYLE (Southern): I am here to speak against Composite Motion 17 on the grounds that it is contradictory to itself. To note, this does not disagree with the motion in its entirety, only certain parts of it. Within Motion 17 it claims that we should as a union be campaigning to increase arm sales to Ukraine and to provide material support and build direct links with Ukrainian trade unions. On the former, we cannot end a conflict by providing more arms. The only way a conflict can end this way is with the total destruction of one side. We have seen the effects of flooding countries with arms. Just look at the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s, the Contras in Nicaragua, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. On the latter point the current administration within Ukraine passed law 5371, which severely limits the ability of trade unions within Ukraine to effectively organise and has opened "a Pandora's box of draconian measures" which are affecting almost 70% of all workers in Ukraine. These include measures that severely curtail the ability of trade unions to represent their members, introducing suspension of employment, and gave employers the right unilaterally to suspend collective agreements. This move was condemned by Sharon Burrows, the General Secretary of the International Trade Union Congress. I would like Congress simply to consider whether we walked blindly into providing support for a neoliberal anti-trade union administration with arms when they crack down on the workers' movement and consciously say, "We have not contradicted ourselves." If war is an industry, how can there be peace in a capitalist world. (*Applause*) I am speaking against Motion 261 as well.

President, delegates, GMB comrades, under all those pronouns, I am speaking against Motion 261. On paragraph 6 of the motion it mentions upgrading allows warfare capabilities. The Ministry of Defence has had a review of their new Ajax infantry fighting programme which was to replace the Warrior, which was supposed to be delivered by 2017 but will not see service until 2029 and has cost £3.5bn to date. The Select Committee stated that the Ajax programme was flawed from the outset. The programme to retrofit the Challenger 2 with an upgrade package, which will cost the taxpayer £1.3bn, still has nothing to show for it. One minister, and this is a Conservative minister, said that it is like trying to put an electric engine into a 1980 Ford Escort; it simply will not work. The Ministry of Defence can easily stop these programmes and instead divest funds into programmes for soldiers and their housing. The Government can also fund social welfare programmes. We are the ones that will pay for the war fund and as Labour

has said, they will not open the government cheque book to fix public expenses. We can guarantee it is other workers and services that will be cut to fund further investment in the military. It is always money for war and not for the poor. The General Secretary said in his address that we should have a workable net zero campaign but when the world's militaries are responsible for 6% of the world's emissions almost the same as carbon emissions from energy production can we say we are working to a net zero.

I have something for you to consider. I have here a photo taken in Yemen of a young girl who was hit by a British made white phosphorous bomb in 2017. Could you look her in the eye and say, "Hey, at least it was a British made bomb that did this." This motion effectively writes a blank cheque for the next government to continue with the barbaric anti-worker foreign policy. We must remember that on both ends of the bayonet there is a worker. Do we want to be on the side of the worker or the warmonger? (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joshua. There is the right of reply to GMB Scotland for Composite 17 and Luke for Motion 261.

CIORSTAI DH REICHE (GMB Scotland): Congress, why are we here? It is written on the podium, to *Make Work Better*. We are fortunate, we do not have bombs dropping. We do not have a country in chaos. We can actually form ourselves, come together, and we can make work better. But the Ukrainian people do not have that option. Surely, as trade unionists we should be helping them do that. We should be investing in education for them, teach them how to protect their workers, teach them how to protect each other. We cannot do that if it does not exist. We cannot do that if there are no Ukrainian people and we certainly cannot do that if Russia takes over that country. (*Applause*) And what is to stop them - people like us. People should take these motions and actually take them to a place where people can make decisions.

Now, I said I had witnessed what happened in some countries and to say it is unpleasant is putting it mildly. Yes, we also showed a photograph of that poor unfortunate girl in Yemen but you see what dictators can do and you see what people like Putin can do, with bodies piled up at the side of holes in the ground, that is war, that is a very one-sided war. So I urge you to let this motion through. I ask you to support this motion because I would like to help the people of Ukraine and I would like them to be there to do so. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ciorstaidh. Luke?

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): Apologies, I said I would be up for the last time but I lied. A really good speech from Joshua, wherever you are. I do not know where you are in the room. It was a really good job, a really good job. I do not disagree with anything he said because the war is horrible. I do not disagree. War is horrible, it is terrible, I hope it never happens. They said about building social houses for our soldiers; that needs to happen. But bombs can destroy houses. We need to be able to defend our borders and, unfortunately, yes, we live in a capitalist world and war is an industry, yes, but other countries are using that war industry and we need to be ready to defend ourselves. I hope it does not come to it but this is a motion about just being ready, just in case.

Now, they said about the Conservatives, like investing all this money in the armoured vehicle programme. Yes, the Conservatives are corrupt. I am not going to argue that, we need to get them out. We said the next Labour government. I want to live in a world with no wars. We do not live in that world. I want my child to live in a world with no wars. We do not live in that world. I personally believe that since NATO was created we have had more peace within Europe. This is the first time we have had a massive scale war. We have had other wars, but this is the first time we have had a massive scale war in Europe, and it is serious, guys, we need to take serious note that there is a lot of geopolitical stuff changing in the world, we need to be ready. That is all this motion is about. All the stuff they said about the change in the money and all that kind of stuff, yes, I wish that money was there to be spent on that but at the moment I genuinely believe that we need to be ready for defence in what is going on in the world at the moment. A fantastic speech, fantastic; that little girl is a tragedy, and I do not want to argue with what was said. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Luke. Can I ask Samanta Zubrute to respond on behalf of the CEC, please.

SAMANTA ZUBRUTE (CEC): The CEC is supporting Composite 17 with qualifications. The CEC wholeheartedly supports the aims of the motion, which are in line with and extend the policy position carried by the CEC and put forward in GMB's motion to the Labour Party Conference in 2022. Congress, we are proud to stand with Ukraine. GMB has consistently called for Ukraine to be supplied with the means of self-defence and the CEC supports the motion calling for a reduction in calls to deny Ukraine that aid.

The CEC's qualification is clarified for the record that the call for the most modern and technologically advanced weapons systems should not be read as a call for nuclear qualification. Secondly, we wish to see a peaceful end of the Putin and Russian authoritarian regime and a rise in an ability to self-determine their policies for the future to be respected without fear of violence and oppression. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking Composite 17 be supported with the qualifications set out. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Samanta. Does Scotland agree to the qualifications? (*Agreed*) Thank you. And London? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will go to that vote first because there has been opposition. All those in favour of Composite 17 please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite Motion 17 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 261, the CEC is supporting. All those in favour please show? Thank you. All those against? That has also been carried.

*Motion 261 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 263 was withdrawn.

*Motion 263 was **WITHDRAWN**.*

THE PRESIDENT: It gives me great pleasure to invite our final guest speaker to this Congress to come to the stage. This is particularly special as she was sadly unable to speak to Congress last year due to travel difficulties. GMB is proud to stand with Ukraine. We have been unwavering in our solidarity and I am pleased to say that GMB has sent £11,000 so far of money donated by our branches to help the Ukrainian people as they continue to fight for their freedom. (*Applause*) It has been over a year since Russia's invasion began and all the terror, death, and destruction, brought with it. But as one Ukrainian trade union sister, who is about to speak to us today, said, "In the darkest moments, people's best sides show themselves, and the same goes for trade unions."

Congress, Ivanna Khrapko is the Chair of the Youth Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, and the Head of Information, Education, and International Cooperation at the State Employees' Union of Ukraine.

Ivanna, we said last year that we would do everything we could to try to get you back to GMB Congress and I am so pleased that you can join us. Congress, please give a warm welcome and show our solidarity to Ivanna. *(Applause)*

IVANNA KHRAPKO, CHAIR OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS OF UKRAINE, AND THE HEAD OF INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AT THE STATE EMPLOYEES' UNION OF UKRAINE, ADDRESSED CONGRESS.

IVANNA KHRAPKO: Hello, everyone. For me it is a very big honour to be here today and to all of the speakers and all that happened, but I am here, I am with you, and I have the opportunity to address the Congress. I want to start my speech, my presentation, with a statement of the Head of the State Employees' Union of Ukraine, my trade union, with a statement of Yurii Pizhuk.

Video Statement of the Chairman of SEUU played to Congress. (Applause)

IVANNA KHRAPKO: My sisters and brothers, I now want to share with you a presentation about the situation in Ukraine, what happened during this terrible 470 days, 470 days of darkness, and every time when I have a meeting with colleagues abroad and I pronounce these things and I talk about work, I feel horrible because on 24th February last year I remember my morning on 24th February started with a phone call from my brother and he said to me, "Ivanna, where are you? War has started," and I said, "I sleep," and after that I looked to my phone and saw everything that happened, and opened my window and heard sirens.

If we can look to my presentation and the next slide, during the 470 days of work in Ukraine more than 8,000 people died, but it is official numbers. We did not know exactly how many other brothers and sisters died, how many of them were killed by Russians, but every time it is hard to talk about children because when the war started I was engaged in the creation, process and help for the Ukrainians from the East of Ukraine and, union brothers and sisters, for me as a young woman it was so difficult to see children who spent three or four weeks in the shelters, but these children were alive. In Ukraine now there is more than 500 children, innocent children, children who should be the future of my country, my Ukraine, and it is horrible that Russians killed them and they continue to do it because you know what happens now, we now have one of the biggest ecological disasters in Europe.

Next one, please. Last year in March, I think, two rockets destroyed a local government building in Mykolaiv and in one moment like 38 hours our union brothers and sisters in Mykolaiv, who are public servants, now there is a hole in this building. What do the trade unions do, we try to support the families of our union members. During last year we advocate a law about financial support of families, not only public servants but all of our workers who engage in public work, who work in railways, who work like a journalist, who lighten the work and help other Ukrainians to move around Ukraine, and now this law is adopted the union puts its effort to this.

Next one. This is also about how many people now are in Russia and here I want to highlight also about children because now officially there are almost three million Ukrainians in Russia but when we talk about our members from Kherson and they share with us how many children Russians deport from the West side of Kherson it is impossible to understand, and we should highlight it because it is, like I said, our future, it is children who are now in Russia and it is terrible. A lot of you or maybe all of you are parents and you can imagine when you cannot connect with your children; it is one of the facts of war.

Next slide, please. Like my union brothers, as Yurii said, I want to express a very deep thank you for helping Ukrainians in the UK. Actually, yesterday in the airport I met one woman from Ukraine. She asked me about health and we talked with her in the airport and she said, "It is so great, you know, Ivanna, it is so great to be here in Britain because my husband is now in the army and I have here work," she is working in an onion factory, and she said a lot of nice things about Britain, about your support, and it is not only this woman, it is a lot of Ukrainians living now in Britain, and they want to thank you so much for your support and for your patience to Ukrainians.

Now an official number of Ukrainian refugees is more than six million. Six million Ukrainians live around Europe, around all of the world, but we have other challenges in Ukraine, which is internally displaced persons, and it is huge numbers. More than seven million people now officially became like internally displaced people and they moved from the East of Ukraine to live in the West. They lost everything. They try to build their life in new places and together with our union brothers and sisters from the West region of Ukraine we help them to find a job, to find a place, and it was one of our first tasks when we started, when we helped Ukrainians to find a safe place in the West of Ukraine, not only abroad.

Please, next slide. I want also to highlight to you about our union youth work because this is a feature from 7th March last year, we had our youth network,

the Federation of Ukraine Youth, and do you know it was amazing because we did not expect the war to start and we did not know what we should do, how we can react, but we had a meeting and we discussed how we can organise our work, how we can help our young workers in Ukraine, and actually we did it.

Next slide, please. We organised and we tried to give information of our country and we provided a lot of reader statements about the situation in the workplace, especially highlighted one of the next biggest problem, the occupation of the police at the nuclear power station. A lot of our brothers and sisters were staying there but they were working under occupation, or some of them should stay home because Russians bombed them, and they did not stay when the nuclear power station was hit, they could leave the work, or if they do it the Russians take them in the basement, and Russians create now in the Zapor region of the nuclear power station a very big place with weapons and you should understand it can be – for me it is really hard to find a word how I can describe it – when you leave every time it is nuclear entrapment, and I do not want a Chernobyl event, because before we talk about it like from history, and now I understand it. For example, Kristina, she is my deputy in our youth network, she is there and I do not know what can happen with her. We cannot take her from that and it is my responsibility and responsibility of my youth network to highlight this problem, which we did I think very successfully.

Next one, please. Also we had great international solidarity support. We had a lot of support in Europe of our sister union organisations and we highlight every time this problem because I notice that it is okay when you watch the news, you read a newspaper, but when you talk to real people who live in the real condition of war it is different, in fact. So we decided with our youth to write articles for readers, and to inform the whole of the world about the situation in Ukraine.

Next slide, please. Like I mentioned before we had huge international support during last year and I want to say many thanks one more time to GMB, to Gary, to Barbara, for their support. We had a meeting here in Liverpool last year and we had a lot of online meetings and you know everything about our condition and I thank you for the support with humanitarian aid. I also thank you for the support, international support, because you are not afraid to highlight it, you are not afraid to state your strong position, and it is very important to all of the unions involved now and union organisations like this one.

Next one, please. Like I said before, last year we did a lot to find a safe place for our union members. In this feature is the daughter of a union member from the Kyiv region, this little girl spent four weeks in the basement in Bucha when war started and thanks to our union connection when Bucha was under occupation we helped them escape to the Carpathia region, and it was amazing to help this little girl and her mother to be in a safe place, but still now we should find and help our trade union members, our Ukrainians, to find a safe place.

Next slide, please. I know that all of you know about destruction of the Kakhovka Dam and two days ago we together with my trade union, State Employees' Union of Ukraine, we created a hotline for support, for the union members to support people leaving certain regions. We should also understand that this disaster touched not only people leaving Kherson, the disaster touched people who live in the Dnieper region, in the (?)Guli region, in the Dnipro region. Some territories are included but in a lot of territory around the disaster the pure water disappeared and people have no clear water they can drink; people can see it themselves.

Next slide, please. There is this problem that you know the left side of Kherson is now under occupation and Russians block the Croatian people from the left side of the area, and there are people sleeping on the roof and asking about help. So one of the problems is to highlight and to push international organisations and national union organisations to create this corridor for Croatian people because it is almost 25,000 people, 25,000 Ukrainians; it is elderly and it is children. You also may hear in your news because yesterday I watched the news, your BBC, it highlights very nicely that a lot of animals die, and a very big zoo was flooded. It is hard to imagine how many died with the Russians in my country. We are a brave nation, we are brave Ukrainians, and I am proud to be part of this nation.

Next slide, please. During last year we organised our humanitarian work as much as we can and we have a business plan. We organise our volunteering initiative trade union lifeline and together with my colleagues we are driving around the whole of Ukraine to provide humanitarian aid, and I want to show you some pictures from our work last year and also like work this year. Please click one-by-one. It is pictures from different regions of Ukraine. That is the Kherson region like on the first day after liberation of this region. It was amazing to hear from our trade union brothers and sisters, who said like how they put their Ukrainian flags on the ground and how they picked them up after liberation, after Russians leave.

Here is one of the nice things we provided Ukrainian children this year, for the children who were in occupied territory. It is a charity event and the Easter spirit was there. We worked with these little children drawing some postcards for our soldiers, and it was so amazing on one side, and on other side it was scary to see when a small child drew totally black postcards, and he said, "Now it's my favourite colour." and my union brothers and sisters this is the reality of children in Ukraine.

Next one, please. I am really happy that we continue to provide our educational work in Ukraine. During last year we organised educational events for our young union leaders, for our young head of the primary trade union organisation, because not only in Ukraine now we have really bad labour legislation and we want to help our union leaders to help them understand how they can work with this labour legislation, how they can help our workers. The second one, the next big problem – there are a lot of big problems – is psychological support and we try to help them psychologically to engage with the conditions.

Next slide, please. This year, the last six months, we organised more physical education events. I do not know actually how we do it because you cannot know for certain when an alarm has started, you cannot know for sure when Russians start to bomb, I do not know, Kyiv, or other cities, you do not know for sure but we did it and I am proud that these young people have an interest in union work, they have an interest in how to help each other, they have an interest in how to help Ukraine, and they did it.

Next one, please. Like I said, regardless of circumstances we should every time think about our union members, our brothers and sisters as we are union leaders, and how we can help Ukrainians, how we can help other people who now need it. Of course, we can continue international work also. It is so important, and I want to repeat it, that when we highlight this problem, when you highlight what is happening in Ukraine, and we know it is very hard to talk about weapons but, guys, when someone asks me and says, "Oh, it should be peace," I agree it should be peace. You think that Ukraine does not want to live in peace? We want to but we do not want someone to take our house. We do not want someone to steal our brothers. My friends who are now in the front line, I do not want it. I do not want someone to occupy the nuclear power station almost in the centre of my country. Some of our factories in the centre of our region will be occupied by someone and this someone will say, "Oh, sorry, now it is our factory." It is impossible to remain. We want peace but we want true peace without Russian occupiers in our territories. Please, continue to highlight this. (*Applause*)

Of course, the humanitarian assistance, and now to the hotline where we receive a lot of requests from our union brothers and sisters, and even today in the morning we start to collect and to provide a humanitarian convoy during this week to Kherson, because they need simple things: they lost clothes, they need some clinical products, they need food, because everything they had has gone. So we continue to do it and we invite you to support us with this. Also, like I mentioned about education, last year I said to Gary and Barbara about your *Make Work Better*, we can make not only work better, we can make the world better through education. *(Applause)*

Last year we really saved our union organisation, our youth organisation. I do not know how we did it but through the education seminars, training, physical or digital, we talked with people and we saved youth networks because like I mentioned before a lot of Ukrainians left Ukraine but a lot of them stayed and a lot of them together with us use the youth network.

Second slide. I am really impressed by British trade union history. I am really impressed by your trade union spirit and it will be a pleasure for us, for young Ukrainians to have something to inspire each other, and I want to repeat to make work and the world better. At the end of my speech I want to show you the statement of our youth network, of my union brothers and sisters. We work with them, shoulder by shoulder, and I really want you also to hear them.

Video of Youth Statement played to Congress.

IVANNA KHRAPKO: Thank you one more time for your support trade union brothers and sisters, in solidarity, and solidarity will prevail. *(Standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Ivanna, what can I say except to thank you so much and you have our full solidarity, and that music, *All we need is love*, by the Beatles, is Ivanna's favourite song so we thought we would play it for her. What a message, all we need is love, and it ties in with what Tye said yesterday, love, peace, and unity. Thank you.

INTERNATIONAL

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to Section 7, the last three motions of this year's Congress so can I call to the front movers and seconders of Motions 264, 265, and 266. Thank you.

RETURN THE REMAINS TO GRENADA
MOTION 264

264. RETURN THE REMAINS TO GRENADA

This Congress must use all its political resources to engage with the UK and/or US Governments to ensure that the remains of the Grenadian leaders slain in October 1983 and believed to be in the possession of the US Government, are returned to their families.

G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH
LONDON

(Carried)

MIKE TINNION (London): I am dedicating this motion to Corbana Denut Niak and his lovely wife, Constance. In 1979, Maurice Bishop led a successful coup against the previous government of Grenada and established a popular socialist government. In 1983, Bishop was placed under house arrest by the members of his government who were not happy with his leadership. A popular uprising followed. Bishop was freed from house arrest by his supporters. However, this led to a power struggle within the government and on October 19th 1983 Bishop and several members of his government were executed by firing squad. The US government had been monitoring the situation in Grenada for some time and expressed concerns about Bishop's government, US officials had also met members of the group that placed Bishop under house arrest. After Bishop was freed the US government became increasingly involved in the situation sending troops to the island as part of a military invasion that took place shortly after the execution.

Given the US involvement in these events it is understandable that many people in Grenada and around the world feel that the US has a responsibility to return Bishop's remains from a moral standpoint. It could be argued that the US owes this to Bishop's family and to the people of Grenada. Just this week justice campaigners, Maisy Barrett and human rights lawyer, Frances Swain, presented the US Embassy a letter calling for President Biden to release the remains of Maurice Bishop to the Grenadian people. Congress, we must ask our MPs to take action and put pressure on the government who have a so-called partnership with the US that should return Pres. Bishop's remains to Grenada. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Secunder?

BEN CAMPBELL-WHITE (London): Maurice Bishop, as Prime Minister of Grenada, was a socialist and champion of democracy, social justice, and self-determination. He and his government implemented progressive policies that aimed to improve lives in this proud independent Caribbean nation. He fought for equal rights, access to education, and better healthcare for all. Tragically, Maurice Bishop and other Grenadian leaders' lives were cut short around the time of the US invasion of Grenada in 1983. The location of their remains is a mystery. It is believed that the remains were removed by the United States after he and nine other revolutionary leaders were executed by firing squad. Their families need closure. Grenada needs closure. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. Mover of Motion 265?

JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA MOTION 265

265. JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA

This Conference pays tribute to the important campaigning of Justice for Colombia on behalf of our trade union movement to support trade unionism, human rights and peace in Colombia.

Conference is committed to continuing our longstanding relationship with JFC. The GMB has long supported JFC's campaigning in defence of trade unionism, human rights and peace in Colombia. The GMB has also lobbied the British government over addressing anti-union violence in Colombia and supporting full implementation of the country's 2016 peace agreement.

Last year Colombia elected its first progressive government thanks to grassroots organising among trade unions, rural communities and social organisations. Colombia now has a historic opportunity to prioritise the needs of the poorest and those hardest hit by violence, to address issues faced by working people and to advance peace with social justice.

Conference welcomes the government's promotion of dialogue with armed groups, including the ELN guerrilla movement and signatories to the 2016 agreement forced to abandon the process by the then-government's lack of compliance.

The appointment of trade unionists to head the Labour Ministry is a positive development in addressing Colombia's dreadful labour rights record. The government plans to guarantee trade union rights, formalise the status of informal workers and eradicate gender and racial inequalities.

However, conference is extremely concerned about Colombia's human rights crisis. Close to 1,400 activists and 340 former guerrillas were murdered in six years following the peace agreement. Colombia remains the world's deadliest country for trade unionists.

Just as international support helped Colombia reach the 2016 peace agreement, it is needed today if the government is to reduce inequality and end conflict.

Conference stands in unconditional solidarity with the Colombian people, including our sisters and brothers in the trade union movement and all those striving for a fairer society.

Conference resolves to:

- Send members on JFC delegations to Colombia to witness the reality faced by trade unionists and activists
- Support the campaign work of JFC
- Affiliate to JFC at national level and encourage broader support at other levels of the union

W15 THREE SHIRES BRANCH SOUTHERN

(Carried)

MARTHA DE BRUXELLES (Southern): Madam President, this Congress the GMB and I pay tribute to my comrades in Justice for Colombia on behalf of my country, those who are fighting for the right of trade unions, human rights, and peace in Colombia. The GMB is a very proud supporter of Justice for Colombia and continues to be a strong relationship with trade unions and human rights campaigners in Colombia. The GMB continue to lobby the British government to address the anti-unionist and human rights violations. Congress welcomes the Colombian's change of leadership with election of the first progressive government thanks to the work of longstanding civil rights activists, the African community, the indigenous population, the marginalised groups, and rural communities, with individuals like my sister, *** Carless Senior Ajudadia who fought for over 20 years to get the government of Gustavo Petro and the first ever Afro Colombian Vice President, Francia Marquez. *(Applause)* We are very proud, believe me.

Congress welcomes the government's promotion of dialogues with other groups, including the ELN gorilla movement, and the signature of peace agreement of 2016. We know that these agreements are fragile. We can see what happened in Northern Ireland. The position of trade unionists by the government of Gustavo Petro and Head of Labour Minister is a positive step to address some of the dreadful violations of workers' rights but let's not forget that we still see more persecutions of unionists and activists. Your support will enable progress to help to unite unions in providing support to strengthen the human rights of the Colombian agricultural unions, Fensuagro. Justice for Colombia supports efforts to create a more open and balanced place in Colombia, organise all workers by providing funds for the use of all voters in the union, to get organised the National Association of Women's Rights. That campaigns for the strength of human rights, peace, and rights for unions too. We organise lawyers to help the unions, beatings and false accusations, victimisations, and access to transitional justice system, and all other marginalised groups.

Colombia, unfortunately, is well known for its good coffee and many other things but one of the worst things we have is that we occupy number one in the level of murders of trade unionists. Just this year 13 trade unionists have been killed. In the last 10 years 3,000. You have heard it right, I have not got it wrong, I have triple-checked, 3,000 trade unionists have been killed in the last 10 years. Everyone in this room could be murdered if you are a trade unionist in Colombia. This is a fact that has been checked through the European friends of our constitution and human rights who have for a long time kept up these records. With the support that helped Colombians in 2016 raise the peace agreement, it is needed today to continue inequality and conflict. Congress has a tradition of solidarity with the Colombian people, including our sisters and brothers in the trade union movement, and is always fighting for a fair and equal society. Some members of the Justice for Colombia delegation went to Colombia this April and our national President, Barbara Plant, had the joy to visit. Unfortunately, she was not taken to dance, which is a total regret, but next time she will do that and we ask for your support to campaign for the work of Justice for Colombia. We call for everyone to affiliate to Justice for Colombia at national level and encourage wider support. Please, I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Martha. Secunder?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): I am so lucky that Martha is in my branch. Not only does she do fantastic work for Justice for Colombia, she also sits on the National Policy Forum for the Labour Party on behalf of GMB, and she is a really, really experienced and helpful rep, particularly members in schools, she gives such great support for them. What I wanted to say here is the first time ever GMB Congress is taking place while there is a left-wing president in Colombia, so enormous progress is being made, but we cannot rest on our laurels here. The situation is progress but it is fragile. The Attorney-General in charge of the legal system still in power of the far right, impeding the government, arresting activists, preventing the peace dialogue with the gorillas. Armed men with guns who kill trade unionists have not gone away. It is absolutely important that the British Trades Union Movement stands with our sisters and brothers in Colombia.

What can we do? First of all, support the motion and do the things which the motion calls for, but go back to your branches and affiliate as a branch to Justice for Colombia. All the work they do is absolutely fantastic, it is £40/£50 really, really great investment in future and in solidarity with the trade union movement in Colombia. I do not know how much it is. I was looking on the website. Our branch obviously does affiliate. Their website is not very good

at having the detail of how you do it so please do not be put off by that, do not think, "Because I can't do it by email I'm not going to do it." Phone them up, find out how to affiliate, give them the money, and let's build Justice for Colombia stronger and stronger with the GMB support and involvement. Thank you so much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. The mover of Motion 266?

FOREIGN AID BUDGET MOTION 266

266. FOREIGN AID BUDGET

This Congress recognises that the UK has a proud history of being a world leader in International Development, with our work benefitting millions.

UK Aid is needed now more than ever before. Covid, conflict and climate shocks have complicated the global challenges we face and as a result, human development is regressing. For the first time in 38 years, the UN Human Development Index has decreased twice consecutively. Specifically, the devastating conflict in Ukraine has exacerbated global hunger. It is estimated that since 2019 the number of those facing acute food insecurity has soared from 135 million to 345 million. A total of 50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the edge of famine according to the World Food Programme.

We are calling GMB to support a fixed timeline to bring Official Development Assistance (ODA) back to 0.7%

L26 RICHMOND & WANDSWORTH BRANCH SOUTHERN

(Carried)

JOSHUA BOYLE (Southern): I am a first-time delegate and now fourth time speaker, suddenly. (*Applause*) This Congress recognises that the UK has a proud history of being a world leader in international development with our work benefitting millions. UK aid is needed more now than ever. With the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, and the climate shocks, have complicated the global challenges we face and as a result human development is regretting. For the first time in 38 years the UN human development index has decreased twice consecutively, specifically the devastating conflict in Ukraine has exacerbated global hunger. It is estimated that since 2019 the number of those facing acute food insecurity has soared from 135 million to 345 million, a total of 50 million people in 45 countries are teetering on the edge of famine according to the World Food Programme. Historically, the UK has also extracted huge wealth from the global south and exported this material and intellectual wealth to the global north. Economists estimate that Britain stole approximately £45 trillion US dollars from India during its colonial rule. This is in addition to other countries, like Jamaica, Grenada,

and Kenya, and more in the Commonwealth that have had those resources extracted. This motion to return the Official Development Assistance (ODA) back to 0.7% is one way we can right this historic wrong. UK spending on ODA as a percentage of the gross national income of which the 0.7% target was originally set by the United Nations in 1970 and made statutory UK law in 2015. The Government slashed this in 2022 to 0.5% of GNI as a temporary measure yet did not lay out an exact timeframe for this to be returned. GMB policy supports promotion of world development and while not specifying what exact target ODA spending should be, have taken the position on the uses and principles of UK overseas development should follow. This motion will allow us to develop the material conditions in other countries which in turn will assist workers of all nations in the spirit of internationalism. We are calling on GMB to support a fixed timeline to bring the Official Development Assistance (ODA) back to 0.7%. I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joshua. And the last seconder of the day?

DAVID JERROM (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) The cut in the ODA programme of 0.2% may not sound a lot but the impact on the ground is massive leading to severe cuts in programmes as diverse as combating plastic pollution in the Galapagos Islands to providing essential medical support for girls in West Africa, and it is going to have an ongoing impact for all communities in lower income countries. Despite there is a commitment from the Government to reinstate the 0.7% rate, it is not expected to happen until after 2027 or 2028, that is four or five years. That is four or five years too late for the millions facing food insecurity, four or five years too late for the estimated 20 million women and girls who will not be reached by programming, the programming made up of education programmes, humanitarian assistance, nutrition interventions, access to clean water and sanitation. Congress, I am appealing to you today, let's help millions of people across the globe and support this motion. Let's make a difference. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, David. I know you have had to wait all week for that. David is from my branch and I think he thinks I deliberately made him be the last speaker; but I did not. Does anyone wish to speak against these motions? No? In that case, can I ask Warinder Juss to speak on behalf of the CEC, please?

WARINDER JUSS (CEC): Good morning, President. Good morning, Congress. Regarding Motion 264, Return the Remains to Grenada, this is a motion that is asking Congress to make a decision on an issue that is new to GMB policy.

However, it seems to be agreed that the remains of Maurice Bishop and other Grenadian leaders who were executed during the 1983 invasion and coup should be returned to their families, and if the US government has those remains then absolutely they should return those remains to their families. The only qualification that the CEC has on this motion is that the CEC reserves the right to assess what action the GMB could take on this issue using the limited resources that the GMB has compared to the resources that the Grenadian authorities would have.

Regarding Motion 265, Justice for Colombia, the CEC welcomes this motion because it concerns GMB's longstanding policy to support Justice for Colombia and to support trade unionism, human rights and peace in Colombia. The first qualification on this motion is that GMB members who attend international solidarity visits that is usually done on the initiative of the member or the branch, or the region, to meet the costs of the attendance.

The second qualification relates to the fact that the motion asks the GMB to affiliate to Justice for Colombia at a national level. Andy mentioned that branches can affiliate to Justice for Colombia and you should do so if you can, but as regards affiliating at a national level it is already GMB policy for GMB to have national affiliation to Justice for Colombia, but any such decision would also be subject of the approval of the CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee, which is again in line with longstanding policy.

So, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 264 and 265 subject to the qualifications that I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Warinder. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 264? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Southern, on 265? (*Agreed*) Thank you. The CEC is supporting 266. That means I can take a vote on all of them together. All those in favour please show? Thank you. All those against? Those motions are carried, 264, 265 and 266. That concludes the business of the Congress in terms of motions.

*Motion 264 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 265 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 266 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I just say what a respectful audience you have been, and that means a lot when people are listening to speeches. That is really important, so, thank you for that. I will now invite London Region to move the Omnibus Vote of Thanks.

OMNIBUS VOTE OF THANKS

PENNY ROBINSON (London): Before I start I am going to apologise for my croaky voice. I am pleased to be giving the Vote of Thanks on behalf of the CEC. Congress, it has been a challenging week. The CEC would like to thank Karen Dudley, who has been a new first-time chair of the SOC and coped brilliantly with the many challenges to the SOC Report No.1. (*Applause*) I have to say it was mostly from first-time delegates, so well done. This has not happened for a long time and we saw a number of motions voted and put back on the agenda. Many of the CEC will remember the buzz of overturning the CEC's decisions.

Thanks to our President, Barbara, and Vice President, Malcolm, for chairing Congress expertly and efficiently, making sure Congress runs on time and coping well with challenges from the floor that were many.

Thanks to Gary for your leadership and giving us the remit to go out there and light those fires.

This is our first Congress as seven regions and although smaller the delegates filled the room with their passion.

Thanks to the National Office staff, Steve Short, Laurence Turner, Anna Barnes, Gavin Sibthorpe, and Ross Holden, for planning and organising Congress. Also thanks to National Office staff on the Info Desk and the Internet Cafe, and Hilary for the Exhibition Area.

Thank you to the venue staff, stewards, and all the organisations running stalls.

Most of all, Congress, the CEC would like to give thanks to you, our delegates. This week has been about you challenging us, questioning us, and setting our policies and direction, whether this is internal or in the workplace. We have heard some passionate speeches from first-time delegates and other speakers, on industrial and workplace matters, but also on some important social issues. Your motions come to life when you sing or you tell us about your wins, struggles, and sadness. We have heard about poo in the sea and

the right to pee. We always enjoy hearing from the reps themselves and we heard the life experiences from our NHS and ambulance workers, Amazon gig and the care workers.

Congress, GMB business does not stop while you are here. I have seen delegates in the corridors and on steps on their phones still answering calls from desperate members needing guidance and urgent help.

Congress is also about the meetings happening behind the scenes, whether with Asda and Direct, telling Kier just what direction we want the Labour Party to travel in. Let's make sure that if we get a Labour government back into power that their policies are our policies and that our members' voices are heard across all of our industries. *(Applause)*

Thanks to our Retired Members Association. We value your contribution and the work you do supporting our members.

You have set our industrial, political and social GMB policies for another 12 months, delivered by you, debated by you, and decided by you. Now we need to go out and continue the fight and deliver on the campaigns that matter to you.

Finally, in the words of the late great Tina Turner, *GMB you're simply the best.* *(Applause)* On behalf of the CEC we thank you for your support and we look forward to the year ahead. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Penny. Thank you. We will now show a quick video, which is a round-off of Congress 2023, so look out to see if you are on there.

End of Congress Video shown to Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. As well as all those little memories I am sure you all have your own memories to take away with you. Thank you. I now call on our General Secretary, Gary Smith, to give his closing speech to Congress. *(Applause)*

GENERAL SECRETARY CLOSING SPEECH

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, it first falls to me to add to the thanks from Penny on behalf of the CEC. The Standing Orders Committee, it is a thankless job sitting in a room at the back of the hall trying to make sure we get through the business. Karen, as Chair what a fantastic job you have

done. Darren, Rafiq, Jo, Mary, Niki, Nigel, and of course our stalwart staff are in there, Barry Smith, thank you so much for all your efforts this week. (*Applause*) I know Congress has disagreed with decisions of the Standing Orders Committee at times this week but nonetheless I know that we all appreciate the work that you undertake.

The CEC observers to the Standing Orders Committee again a really important role, David Hope and Bob Welham, thank you so much again for your input. (*Applause*)

To the team of T5, Gary, Phil, and the whole team, I do not know if we are going to have to nail this to the floor next year or tell the Labour Leader to stop wrestling with the bloody thing, but we all had a few moments watching Kier with it last year. Thank you. I know you all go above and beyond for us and we love working with you. We had problems with some of the decoration outside the hall and I arrived on Saturday afternoon to see the team up on the cherry-picker. Gary, please pass on our thanks to the whole team, T5. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Michael, the verbatim shorthand writer, again what a hard job that is and, Michael, thank you on behalf of the whole of Congress. (*Applause*)

BSL interpreters, I do not know how you interpret some of the stuff at this Congress, not least my accent, particularly when I am rattling on, but we are very much appreciative of the work you do. It is absolutely fantastic and really, really important. (*Applause*) It is really important in terms of the inclusion in our Congress.

I want to pay special tribute to Hilary Perrin, who does such a fantastic job around the exhibition. Hilary, apart from doing 20,000 steps a day running about the Conference Centre, she is an absolute stalwart with us as a union; she also does so much to raise money which supports this fantastic event. Hilary, thank you from the bottom of my heart. (*Applause*)

To all our exhibitors, we really appreciate your support, you are part of the rich fabric of this Congress, and we hope to see you again next year.

To the Brighton security staff, Michael, I know you have been working so hard, Leggy who heads up the catering team, and all the security team, all the Brighton staff here thank you for making this such a wonderful event.

To our own GMB stewards, I spoke to them this morning, and Malcolm and Barbara caught up with the GMB stewards this morning, a welcoming face in the morning, you did a great job. Sam, I know this is going to be your last Congress, if we do not talk you out of retirement, but again what can I say, you are absolutely integral to the success of this event. Thank you. *(Applause)*

Our General Member auditors, this is their first Congress since they were elected, Jane, Kevin, Stephen, Karen, thanks for the role that you undertake, it is a really important one in terms of the organisation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

The crèche staff, it is a really hard job and we are very grateful for the support that you have given the event; that allows more people to participate, so thank you to the crèche staff for what you have done. *(Applause)*

I sometimes work out of a national administration unit in Paisley and I see all the work that goes on there so if anybody has worked up in Paisley today we are very, very appreciative of the role that you perform keeping the machine going and to the staff who are here, Graham Down I spoke about, it will be Graham's last Congress as our Head of Finance but what a fantastic job you do. Bob, Alison, Gary, Sam, John, thank you for being here, thanks for all the support you have provided, and thank you for your input. *(Applause)*

A very special thank you from me to the Research and Policy team. Honestly, they are there before 7 o'clock in the morning, they are there late at night altering speeches, helping out, just making sure that they get the platform notes in order. They just do so much fantastic work for us and they have to put up with me all year. I know I drive them absolutely bonkers inviting people to Congress and coming up with all these last-minute ideas, but Laurence, Anna, and Ross, you are three very, very special people. Well done. *(Applause)*

A couple of other people that deserve medals having worked with me at national office, Steve Short and Sangeeta. Steve just does so much around the running of the union, supporting the CEC, and all the committees, and then you will see him at Congress loading and unloading a van, and Sangeeta, thanks for a great shift. Thank you so much for what you have done. *(Applause)*

Pat Gannon, over a decade on the Info stall, ever reliable; brilliant, Pat, thank you. Ann Campbell, at her first Congress here and I hope you have enjoyed

yourself, we certainly have enjoyed having you as part of the team.
(*Applause*)

Kev Panton, for anybody who has come to Congress for any amount of time will know Kevin. Kevin, brilliant, and always part of this family and we are very grateful for your input to the Congress every single year. He does all the running about and so much of the heavy lifting.

Lauren, Eleanor, Lindsey, Gavin, Asher, Megan, Lauren Strain, Jennifer and Natalie, all done a shift this week on the stalls or helping out at the top table, thank you so much team, what a great effort you have put in. Thank you.
(*Applause*)

To my dear comrade, John Callow, who is here. John, thanks for all your patience and hard work, working with Steve Short in particular, but thank you for your input about the rulebook. We have started on a process where the rulebook clearly defines what we are about as a union so, thank you, John, for your work. (*Applause*)

Tye, great contribution as ever, fantastic. What wonderful work we are doing. We said we were going to change this union and Tye is absolutely integral to the team that is delivering that change at National Office. Thank you, Tye.
(*Applause*)

Dan Shears, he works for Lindsey in the Health & Safety team, Dan does so much work at Congress, including making sure we are here and minimising risk as best we can. Dan, thank you again for another fantastic shift.

To the team that work with me at National Office, you are always so patient, you are always so supportive, and I know what a tremendous amount of work you put in to this Congress. Emma Johnson in HR, Jamie who has just joined us now as our Head of Legal, Ray Wilson who does many things for us at National Office, including heading up the Women's Campaign Unit, and the woman who has to put up with me every single day and I know it drives you mad, Wendy, thank you so much. Thanks to you all. (*Applause*)

I want to pay special tribute to our comms team this week. We do not have a big bureaucracy in the GMB. It is a small type team. They do some incredible stuff ably and really well supported by our regions. I love that team spirit but I thought with the coverage we have had leading up to Congress I think it has just been fantastic and I hope you have followed some of the media coverage as we have gone through this week. They are

extraordinary people who do great things, Emma, Scott, and John Parker Dean. You cannot miss John, he has an energy drink in one hand and a phone always in his other, but what an important contribution you have made to Congress, what high profile we have had going through this week with the message, and it has just been fantastic. Thank you, team. *(Applause)*

To my great friend who heads up the campaigns in the communications team, Mark Betteridge, thank you for all your support, all your guidance, and again I know that I contribute to your blood pressure going through the roof at times, but I hope you are proud of what we have done this week and what we have done together. Thank you, Mark. *(Applause)*

To the national secretaries and national officers who work so hard on behalf of the union, work with me, thank you for your input and thanks for the contribution you have made this week. *(Applause)*

From me, I want to pay particular tribute again to our wonderful National President, who represents everything good about this union. Barbara, you do a great job. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

To somebody who is an absolute rock, absolute rock, he is there as Mr. Dependable, always there for me, Barbara, and for the rest of the team, Malcolm, thanks so much, brother. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I do just want to pay special acknowledgement and she may be watching today, one of our staff who is not very well, I want to send best wishes to Michelle McCrossen from Midlands Region. *(Applause)* I hope you are listening, Michelle, and we send you all our love and very, very best wishes to you and Dave.

We do not have a big bureaucracy in the union, we depend on our people going above and beyond, working really hard covering multiple briefs and working so flexibly and the reason they do it is for you because every one of our people has a passion for the people in this hall, for you as delegates, and for our members. I see it every day. The thing that always guides them is that we are doing this for our members. When they are tired and they get a bit irritable, normally with me, I know what sustains them, that they are doing it on your behalf.

I do want as I draw this to a conclusion to celebrate all that we do and what we have done and achieved this week but it is right as well that we recognise

when we do not get things right, and this week we received our challenge of diversity, including the top table and on some of our panels, and I want to thank the people who raised that challenge. Thank you for the way that you made the challenge and, above all, thank you for your support in striving to make this union better. You will always be heard in your union. We are a working class organisation, I am so proud of that, but we are a working class organisation that celebrates our class in all its wonderful diversity. Thank you for presenting that challenge. (*Applause*)

I have made this point often but it is never lost to me, I did start working on my 16th birthday and I served as an apprentice and spent my whole life in GMB. I have seen the ups and downs, at times I have been disappointed, I have had too many disagreements over the years with people to remember but what I never forget is at the heart of this union is goodness, there is a fundamental decency to this organisation, it is a union of ordinary women and men who come together to do extraordinary things. I am reminded this week of the responsibilities on me and I take those very seriously. Thank you.

As I leave here I will be very emotional, I always am when I represent this organisation, but I am hugely energised so thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you have bestowed on me, for this honour, for your comradeship and support as we strive to take this union forward. Remember, when we come together and we debate some people are going to fall out, we will disagree with each other, but there is always more that unites us in this organisation than divides us. In this room we are hundreds but we represent hundreds of thousands of people and what you have heard this week is about the extraordinary campaigns we are running, the organisation that we are building, and the fighting that is going on in workplaces up and down the country to get pay justice and better outcomes, and improve the world of work for our members. Celebrate the fact that this union, you, are bucking trends, building a working class organisation. You are setting records in terms of growing our membership. If we continue moving forward in the spirit of solidarity we are going to write, I promise you, another wonderful chapter in the history of this great union. The point is often made that we stand on the shoulders of giants. Much of what has been said this week we are also in the business of toppling those giants when they do not treat our members properly, absolutely, unequivocally, Amazon, we are coming for you. (*Applause*)

We have been going through an enormous process of change and I am very grateful for your support in that, we are changing the structures in the union, we are changing our ways of working within the organisation, and we have

not talked about this enough, I suspect, this week, we are also seeking to change the culture in this union as well. The process of change can be difficult, it can be disconcerting, but it is absolutely the right thing to do to secure the future. We are getting better, we are getting stronger, and I promise you we have started the revolution in this union that will be ongoing and permanent.

As we leave here I just remind you, the core business is in the workplace, it is campaigning, it is organising, that is what is in our DNA and that whole agenda we are going to keep doubling down on it. Comrades, go back to your workplaces, listen to the members, and keep building those industrial campaigns. You have done great things, we are doing great things together, keep coming together, keep building that solidarity, keep making work better. Thank you very much. (*Standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, please stay standing for *The Red Flag*.

The Red Flag was played to Congress.

Congress concluded.