

**GMB  
CONGRESS 2023**

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**BARBARA PLANT  
(National President)  
(In the Chair)**  
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**Held in:  
The Brighton Centre,  
Brighton  
on:  
Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023  
Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023  
Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023  
Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023  
-and-  
Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

.....  
**PROCEEDINGS  
DAY FOUR  
(Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023)**  
.....

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**FOURTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS  
WEDNESDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023  
MORNING SESSION**

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

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. Thank you. I have a couple of announcements to make while you are taking your seats.

Congress, it has been brought to my attention that during the course of this week, a term for sexual violence was used as a metaphor for the government's policies towards public services. I know that passions run high, but I would like to advise all delegates that this is not an appropriate use of language, either in the Congress Hall or in fringe meetings. Thank you. I know that passions run high.

Please note that some motions in your programme for this morning have been withdrawn or found to be out of order for debate. I will advise you of these motions during the session.

An emergency motion has been scheduled for debate during the session. This is emergency motion 3. This will be debated with the Social policy: Equality and inclusion motions.

**STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NUMBER 5**

**STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE CHAIR CONGRESS 2023**

**7 JUNE 2023**

**SOC REPORT NO 5**

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS

KAREN DUDLEY, STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MOVING SOC

REPORT NO 5.

**BUCKET COLLECTIONS**

THE AMOUNT COLLECTED YESTERDAY BY MIDLANDS REGION FOR THE AMAZON STRIKERS WAS £900, 500 PESOS AND A CENT.

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, I FORMALLY MOVE ADOPTION OF SOC REPORT NO 5.

### **NOTE TO DELEGATES**

SOC REPORT NO 5 WAS ADOPTED BY CONGRESS

THE PRESIDENT: I will now call Karen Dudley, who will now deliver Standing Orders Committee Report No. 5.

KAREN DUDLEY (SOC Chair): Congress, I am moving Standing Orders Committee Report Number 5. Bucket collections. The amount collected yesterday by the Midlands Region during the bucket collection for the Amazon strikers was £900. (*Applause*) Plus 500 pesos and one cent. (*Laughter*) I am beginning to see that something is happening here. What else is in the bucket? I formally move SOC Report No. 5.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. I assume there is no opposition to that report? All those in favour, please show? All those against, please show? That report is adopted.

*SOC Report No. 5 was **ADOPTED.***

As I said about the bucket collections before, regions will be invited to top those up, and it will go to the Finance & General Purposes. I am sure we can add to that as well to make it well over a thousand pounds. Thank you. (*Applause*)

I now invite Jan Smith, National Secretary of the Retired Members Association, to address Congress.

### **RETIRED MEMBERS' ASSOCIATION REPORT**

JAN SMITH (RMA): Good morning, Congress, President, General Secretary, Barbara and Gary, colleagues and friends. It gives me great pleasure to give to you the National RMA Report. I would like to say that it was a great privilege and appreciation on behalf of Margi Clark and myself to be able

to take part in the Banner Parade showing our RMA National Banner.  
(Applause)

Since last year and the amalgamation, we have now got some new members on our National Committee. To our older members, we give our sincere thanks to those who have left us. At our last meeting, we had a presentation to four members of our committee. They received the Silver Badge. They were presented with it by Gary on our behalf. They were Billy Golding, John Stevenson, Ann Leader and George Tessell. (Applause) We wish them well and thank them sincerely for all the work that they have done on behalf of the RMA and the GMB.

Our meetings are held at Mary Turner House, and they are face-to-face or we have hybrid meetings on TEAMS, but I have to say that the hybrid meetings system really does not work because it keeps letting people down and people cannot get in etc. Gary witnessed this at our last meeting.

We have had speakers to our committee meetings and they were John Eccles, who is downstairs in the foyer, speaking on the UIA insurance and GMB protect.

On two occasions, we have had Gary. He has given us updates on the GMB and ways forward. From this, we are collating suggestions which will be discussed at our next meeting on our ways forward. In doing that, I give thanks to London Region, which withdrew resolution 305, to allow us to continue our talks with Gary and the RMA. Going forward and within these suggestions, as to the new sections, let me remind Gary and the CEC that the bulk of us still pay grade 1 membership, and we carry out discussions by going to disciplinary hearings and appeals. But we will not be classed as second-class citizens. Our voice has to be heard because this would not be in line with us having a voice within the industrial new sections. It is a bit like the equalities, when the other year we were not allowed a voice. That was criticised in the Monaghan Report but, thankfully, we got that voice back. So, please, we need a voice within these sections. (Applause)

Our constitution, because of the amalgamations it means that we are now down to seven regions instead of nine, is being looked at and those suggestions will be discussed at our next meeting. Each region has been invited to send in what they consider ought to be changed within our constitution. That meeting will take place in July, and again it should have

been a hybrid but we have changed it round to allow face-to-face discussions on that.

We are holding a conference this year, which will be on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Again, it will be at Mary Turner House. Can I remind people that motions and visitors names have to be in by 1<sup>st</sup> August. Please send them either to myself or to Pat Gannon.

We have had the RMA stall downstairs, and I give thanks to John Stevenson and Roger Bolston who have manned that stall all week. I thank those who have given raffle prizes and to you who have bought raffle tickets. This has amounted, I am told this morning, to around £880. (*Applause*) If there is any region which has not donated anything or would like to top that money up, we would sincerely appreciate it because from our raffles and the percentage we get from regions, that is where we get our finance from.

I give sincere thanks to Steve Kemp, our co-ordinator. Since Steve has been back out of retirement working with us as our co-ordinator, he has done wonders. I also send, on behalf of Congress, our thanks to Steve and his family at the difficult time he has gone through. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Steve. God bless you! (*Applause*)

Sincere thanks go to Monica Smith, our honorary president. Monica, unfortunately, could not be with us on this occasion but she will be with us at our National Conference. We look forward to seeing her. To Pat Gannon, you work wonders. You are a brick. You are there all the time. Anything we need or anything that needs doing, you do it. Thank you so very much. We appreciate that. (*Applause*) I also give thanks to my region, to Warren Kenny, to Ida Clemo, Penny Robinson and Warren's new secretary, Amita, for the help and support that you give to myself. (*Applause*) It means an awful lot to know that there is someone there who I can turn to.

Going back to our conference, we will be having speakers at that conference, and those speakers will be Gary, our General Secretary; Barbara, our President, and George the National Pensions Officer. They will have a lot to contribute to us, giving us their thoughts and what they wish us to do. We look forward to that and hope that the delegates will enjoy it.

Last but not least, colleagues, I give sincere thanks to my husband, Colin, who sits at the back of the hall – he has been here all week on his scooter – who supports me all the time by taking phone calls, messages. You name it, he's there. Colleagues, we spent our honeymoon at Congress 39 years

ago. (*Applause and cheers*) Colin, you've had a lot to put up with. Thank you so much. Love you lots. (*Applause*)

As we move forward, we will all work together, reunited and united together. God bless you all I recommend my report to you. Have a safe journey home, everybody, tomorrow. (*Applause*) If anyone wants to know any further information about the RMA, you can contact myself or through your regional secretary, etc. If you read page 54 in *this* little book, you will see that there is a good write-up about the RMA Retired Members' Association. To regions, I receive many calls from people who wish to remain active within the GMB and want to become a life member. I always forward them on. If I don't know where to go, I do it through my London Region, who passes it on to the appropriate regions. So, therefore, we are doing a lot of retention of membership, which is very important as well as recruitment. God bless, and thank you all. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan, for your report and for all the work that the RMA does. I know there is a vast wealth of experience that we must not lose in this union. I look forward to coming to your conference in October, and a happy 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary to you and your husband. (*Applause*)

We now move on to section 4: Union Organisation: Education & Training, which involves Motions 63, 64, 65 and 66.

## **UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING**

The CEC is supporting all of these motions, with some qualifications, so I intend to take a single vote, which is what we did yesterday, unless there are opposition speakers or qualifications are not accepted.

### **NEURODIVERSITY TRAINING**

#### **MOTION 63**

#### **63. NEURODIVERSITY TRAINING**

This Congress notes that for many years Diversity and Inclusion has been at the heart of GMB Union yet what GMB fails to do, is any Neurodiversity Training something that has now started in Southern region.

We therefore call upon GMB to introduce Neurodiversity Training nationally as part of the training programme.

#### **G36 SECURITY BRANCH**

#### **SOUTHERN**

(*Carried*)

PAUL SONY (Southern): President and Congress, I am moving Motion 63 – Neurodiversity Training. For many years diversity and inclusion have been at the heart of the GMB Union. Yet what GMB fails to do is any neurodiversity training. Neurodiversity is a wide range of differences in the individual brain function and behaviour trace regarded as the normal variation in the human population. This includes ADHD, autism, Tourette's, just to name a few. Without understanding neurodiversity, people may think that people are being rude, especially in meetings when the fidget, say something without waiting their turn and how they behave, as an example.

You may be surprised to know that it is estimated that one-in-seven people, or more than 15% of people in the UK, are neurodivergent. It means that more than 90 delegates attending this Congress, or almost a one-region delegation, have a neurodivergent condition of some sort. Also, those people who have a neurodivergent condition are more likely to be LGBTI+ as well.

While a lot of neurodivergent conditions have been recognised for more than a hundred years, some have only been recognised in the past 10 years by the NHS. Someone with a neurodivergent condition often have a talent or interest which, once established, should be encouraged to develop and use, and for employers and trade unions, like GMB, should take the option to use the person with the talent or interest.

Less than one year I was diagnosed with having the ADHD condition, which I am still being assessed and treated for to get the right treatment, if the treatment can be found, as well as having other neurodivergent conditions, such as DTD, dyslexia and of course being a gay man.

I am grateful for the support that Southern Region has provided. I am proud that GMB Southern Region last year introduced neurodiversity training for all reps, and I as one of the reps who took part in the first training session. Reps who have training have a better understanding of neurodiversity and are able to support members in meetings etc who have a neurodivergent condition. These help the reps to support their members much better and training should be provided in all regions to all reps and also to all GMB officers and personnel in all regions as part of their national training programme.

All regions and National should contact the Southern Region education officer, Alan Fraser, to get training details so they can run a neurodiversity *training* course in their regions. They will have to put up with Alan Fraser, like I have one, in training. You know him, he probably needs *this* to keep quiet from the bad jokes he tells.

But let's show to everyone that we, as a union, are inclusive, diversified, and open to all who have a neurodivergent condition, that we are a 21<sup>st</sup> century union and, most of all, we are a family that supports each other no matter what the situation or our background. Please support this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Secunder.

JOSE GOMEZ (Southern): Vice President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 63, Neurodiversity Training. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Last year GMB Southern Region introduced neurodiversity training for all reps in our region. This training is an important tool for our reps and should be introduced to our GMB officers and staff. This will give them the tools to be able to assist our reps and our members with neurodiversity conditions, to navigate the minefield of issues with employment and that their everyday lives may bring. This will make the GMB more inclusive and diversified, and it will greatly help all.

As my comrade just stated, we are moving this motion because neurodiversity has a wide range of differences in individual's brain functions and behavioural traits. Regarded as part of a normal variation in the human population, this includes ADHD, autism, Tourette's, just to name a few. Without the understanding of neurodiversity, some people tend to pre-judge those with the different conditions. This training will go a long, long way to expel those judgments. It is vital for all regions to have neurodiversity as part of their training programme. Please support.  
*(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jose. I call the mover of Motion 64.

## **THE UNSEEN WHEELCHAIR AND THE INVISIBLE CRUTCH MOTION 64**

### **64. THE UNSEEN WHEELCHAIR AND THE INVISIBLE CRUTCH**



Congress notes that members with unseen or non-visible disabilities, commonly described as hidden disabilities, are misunderstood, underacknowledged, underappreciated, and undercelebrated within the workplace and the union.

The hidden disabilities sunflower scheme states that in the UK alone 1 in 5 people have a disability with 80% of those being invisible. This means that at the table you are sitting at, the probability is that at least one person may have an unseen disability.

The Cabinet Office explains that a non-visible disability is a disability or a long-term health condition that is not immediately obvious, and it can defy stereotypes of what people might think disabled people look like. This can make it difficult for people with unseen disabilities to access what they need.

The impact of living with unseen disability can be slight or can have a huge effect on someone's life. There remains a stigma around unseen disabilities which causes people not to want to share because of their experiences of poor treatment from managers and colleagues; or due to fear of how they will be perceived.

We need to smash that stigma in order that we can effectively support these people in the workplace and welcome them into membership.

We call upon Congress to:

1. Continue to support and work alongside members and self-organised Ability groups in the GMB to campaign to raise the profile of unseen disabilities.
2. Campaign on providing better understanding and awareness through learning and development, education and supporting training including information on conscious and unconscious bias, to smash the stigma around unseen disabilities.

**C46 CENTRAL NORTH NHS BRANCH  
LONDON**  
*(Carried)*

ANN WEEKES (London): Congress, I am the vice-chair of London Ability, a first-time delegate and first time at moving a motion. *(Applause)* Listen up, Congress. I have four minutes. I could use this time to talk about statistics. As of 2022 the largest disability employment gap is 50 to 64 years old, making up 40% of the working-age disabled population. Long-term health conditions increase by 2.6 million, and 2.1 million reported that their conditions limited their day-to-day activities and 850,000 were limited a lot. Congress, my minutes are reducing.

I could use them to talk about the wide range of unseen disabilities and difficulties impacting our workforce; diabetes, cancer, cardio, respiratory, neurodivergent, neurological, cognitive, sensory and physical. Congress, time is going fast. I could use it to talk about terminology and the use of hidden, which for many implies that disabled people are hiding in favour of terms such as unseen or non-visible to recognise that many disabilities are not visually obvious to the onlooker. Congress, time ticks away fast.

Should I use what time I have left to talk about the challenges people with unseen disabilities face in the workplace or community. The £49.9 million Government-funded access to work is fizzling in a hole as disabled workers miss opportunities to utilise £66,000 each for reasonable workplace adjustments. Most people only see physical manifestations of disabilities. Conscious or unconscious biases automatically think "Wheelchair, crutches, walkers or canes"; discrimination and prejudice, accusations of faking it or taking advantage, higher rates of grievances or disciplinaries, lack of credibility in roles and abuse and bullying from neighbours, shoppers and, unfortunately, other visibly disabled people.

Congress, my time is almost up. We spent the last few minutes together. You have noticed my hair, what I'm wearing, the colour of my skin and the sound of my voice, but how many of you noticed that I am only moving my right arm and that my left arm is limited? If you have spoken to me, did you notice my hearing aids? If you are related to Superman, use your x-ray vision to see the chronic fatigue and intercranial hypertension inside of me. As confident as I may appear, how would you know my struggles with attending conference or public speaking due to my complex post-traumatic stress disorder? So reasonable adjustments, please. Let me finish.

I wear a mask and don't generally shake hands, not because I am unsociable or imitating Hannibal Lecter, but because I am vulnerable. A cold for you could be hospital for me. There but for the grace of God go I. You may be feeling great today but if any of you have been fortunate enough not to be born disabled, then like myself you could end up with an acquired disability, the majority of which will be an unseen wheelchair or an invisible crutch. Congress, directly or indirectly, this issue affects every single person in this room, and it is amazing that the CEC and the National Equalities Disability Forum supports this London Abilities campaign. You have been a rock and I will miss you.

All of our motions are important, and as we spend our last day together I ask you to stand united with me and the London Region in my final words: *(Singing):*

*"There may be mountains that we will have to climb,  
And there may be battles that we will have to fight,  
But victory or defeat is up to us to decide how can we expect to win if we don't unite.*

*We just can't give up now!" (A standing ovation and cheers)*

*“Nobody told us the road would be easy and I don’t believe we’ve come this far”.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ann. Secunder? Congress, just don’t think you can all get up and sing a song to get extra time. It won’t happen.  
*(Laughter)*

STEPHEN JONES (London): Vice President and Congress, I am seconding this motion. Firstly, how do I better that? It was absolutely remarkable. Thank you. I certainly did not expect the singing as well. I am here to second the motion: The Unseen Wheelchair and the Invisible Crutch.

I am proud and honoured to be seconding this motion. As Ann said she is the assistant chair of London Ability. I happen to be the organiser of Ability for London as well, and we are all very proud of what Ability is doing. Full credit to them. So that’s the three plugs from me.

I wholeheartedly support this motion, having represented countless members with unseen disabilities as well as suffering from one myself since 1980 and nobody has seen it. I have experienced the negative side of having an unseen disability as well. I am only too aware of the negative impact that responses from employees can have on those affected. It seems appropriate to name a few of the huge range, so it is not a definitive list, of such unseen disabilities. These include, amongst many others, MS – multiple sclerosis – fibre myalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes, arthritis or rheumatoid arthritis, cardiac problems and many, many others. The list goes on.

In some organisations, including the NHS, our members may suffer from painful arthritis, but are told by management – you are not going to believe this – “Oh, you need to toughen up” and “Get a grip”. Such comments are not just unhelpful but are totally and utterly unacceptable and we must stop this. Strenuous steps need to be taken to make employees aware that unseen disabilities can affect anyone at any time and, if necessary, reasonable adjustments need to be made. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. I call the mover of Motion 65.

## **UNDERSTANDING SELF EMPLOYMENT IN THE GIG ECONOMY MOTION 65**

### **65. UNDERSTANDING SELF EMPLOYMENT IN THE GIG ECONOMY**

This Congress welcomes the work that GMB has done in securing a recognition agreement with Evri (formerly Hermes).

This Congress notes however that Self Employment in this industry is not always fully understood by the GMB.

This Congress resolves to provide policy and better training for lay officials and officers to understand the struggles and difficulties we face and to research and take action regarding the gaps in policy and law for the Self Employed in this industry.

**H62 EVRI BRANCH  
SOUTHERN**  
*(Carried)*

EMMA WALLACE (Southern): Congress and Vice President, I am bringing Motion 65 – Understanding self-employment within the gig economy – to Congress. This is my first time at Congress and I am a first-time speaker.  
*(Applause)*

What is the gig economy, I hear you say? Well, we are hoping to make history here in the Commercial Services sector by bringing the gig economy under the spotlight and exposing the realities of the service providers who are somewhere on the sliding scale between self-employed and employment. I am talking about companies like Evri, Uber and Deliveroo. I have personally worked in the industry as a self-employed courier for 20 years and have witnessed more negative changes than I care to remember. For many of us, it began as such a pleasurable little job, and it has naturally grown through e-commerce, development and Covid lockdown when some career volumes suddenly increased by up to 400% overnight. However, the goalposts are ever changing, and we never know which loophole we will be asked to jump through the next day. We are self-employed individuals who front all the business costs, yet we must follow company instruction to the letter to be in with any chance of achieving our ever-expanding bonus criteria. For many years we faced the plight of having no support at all where genuine hard-working people lost their jobs if they did not provide a replacement to cover their workload in cases of illness or emergency. Disciplinary can get handed out like sweets and parcels are daily put before people.

Events like vehicle breakdowns, sickness, hospitalisation and even tragic circumstances like having to sit at a loved-one's bedside to say goodbye or family funerals are just seen as an inconvenience. Without the legal protections afforded to employees, in the gig economy people are treated as secondary to profit. We have had cases where couriers have been

sacked in the back of ambulances and couriers have received calls whilst in hospital asking them what is happening with the parcels. Some couriers have even been attacked with weapons for their vehicle and its contents. Very sadly, one of our colleagues ultimately lost his life this way. All of this and more is faced every day by people who just want to earn a fair living and provide for their families.

On the back of an employment tribunal against Evri, GMB secured a recognition agreement which was the catalyst to where we are today. We are such an anomaly that many people have never actually heard of the gig economy, or they certainly don't understand it. This lack of understanding is even within the GMB itself, as we have found there is very little legislation and no current policies in the GMB rule book regarding self-employment in the gig economy. This makes it very hard to get the job done with half of the tools missing. We hope by making this change it will open the doors for other gig economy service providers in the Commercial Services sector to become unionised as well.

So I call on this Congress to help us by providing policy and making better training available for lay officials and officers to understand the struggles and difficulties we face as well as researching and taking action regarding the gaps in policy and law for the self-employed people in this industry. Please support this motion. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Emma. I call the seconder.

SYED RAZA (Southern): Congress and Vice President, I am seconding Motion 65 on Understanding Self Employment in the Gig Economy. The GMB has decades of experience in supporting workers in self-employment. Many gig economy workers are self-employed and different laws and policies apply to them. Please support this motion to provide additional training to GMB offices and lay members who are in the Gig economy. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Syed. I call the mover of Motion 66.

## **MODERN DAY SLAVERY TRAINING MOTION 66**

### **66. MODERN DAY SLAVERY TRAINING**

This Congress would like union representatives, as part of the GMB education resources, to have modern day slavery training included as part of our ongoing support to members.

Modern slavery is a heinous and often a hidden crime. It includes slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. The impact can be devastating for any of the victims. In 2016, 3,805 potential victims were identified and referred in the UK. In the year to March 2017 the police in England and Wales recorded 2,255 modern slavery crimes. However, many more crimes and victims go undetected.

We have adopted this as part our policy within the union but using the toolkit to support representatives and members to understand it within our education departments.

With this increased awareness and reporting to law enforcement to tackle the perpetrators of modern slavery as well as protecting victims we are playing our part in supporting our members and recognising the signs.

**K19 SOUTH LONDON GENERAL BRANCH  
SOUTHERN  
(Carried)**

LINDITA SALIASI (Southern): Congress, I propose Motion 66: Modern Day Slavery Training. Modern day slavery is horrendous and often a hidden crime. Modern day slavery is made up of two principal parts: forced labour and forced marriage. Both refer to situations of exploitation that the person cannot refuse or cannot leave because of the threats of violence, coercion, deception or abuse of power.

What are the five types of modern slavery, you ask? They are sex trafficking, bonded labour or debt bondage; domestic servitude; forced child labour; and unlawful recruitment and the use of child soldiers.

In 2016, 308,000 potential victims were identified and referred in the UK. In the year to March 2017 the police in England & Wales recorded 255,000 modern slavery crimes. However, many more crimes and victims go undetected. GMB activists can be on the frontline of identifying this kind of victims. Training should provide awareness for our union reps to identify and spot the signs. GMB, in providing training, will support them to know what they are looking for and how to act to expose the crimes and ensure the safety of survivors.

Modern day slavery has a devastating impact on the survivors. Even once they have been freed from their situation, it still has long-term impacts and it is very difficult for them to start again. They need more professional and psychological support, and the Government need to do more.

I have a few questions for you, which I need your participation. As GMB reps, how many of you would have the confidence to spot the signs of modern day slavery? There is the answer. If you identified modern day

slavery in the workplace you were dealing with, how many of you would know what to do with that information? No hands are up. That is the answer! Don't we all want to have the training and be able to spots the signs and protect and save the victims, because I do? Congress, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Secunder?

LEILA KASSAM (Southern): Congress, I am seconding Motion 66 on Modern Day Slavery Training. I fully support everything that Lindita has just said. For my speech, I wanted to focus on the Government's recent decision to re-classify modern slavery as an issue of illegal immigration. It is just another example of this Government's callous and heartless actions. The decision means that survivors of modern day slavery, once identified, can be punished as if they are criminals. It is inhumane to treat victims in this way. They need support, not persecution. GMG must stand up against this ignorant Government who continue to treat human beings without compassion and with cruelty. Training for reps on modern day slavery will help not only help to ensure that we can identify the issue but also the right way to support survivors. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. I now call on Carol Robertson to give the CEC qualification. While Carol is coming to the rostrum, can the movers and seconders of Motions 58 and 60 come to the front. Motion 62 has been withdrawn by Midlands.

CAROL ROBERTSON (CEC): Congress, I am responding to the debate for the CEC. The CEC is supporting Motion 64 and we are seeking to support Motions 63, 65 and 66 with qualifications. On Motion 63 the CEC recognises and welcomes Southern Region's important campaigning work on this issue. Our qualification is that the Equality and Inclusion Department's training priorities are currently focused on providing reps with the skills to implement equality campaigns in their branches and workplaces. This year the GMB is looking to develop and unseen disability campaign with associated resources and training, which will include signposting about neurodiversity and this priority should be able to continue.

On Motion 65, our qualification is that research on the issues in the Gig and platform economies are ongoing, and that this is an evolving area. Training in these areas should, therefore, be approached on a case-by-case basis as part of the GMB @ Work consolidation training.

On a similar basis, we are seeking to qualify Motion 66 to say that training on modern day slavery should be targeted for those reps who feel that their employers are particularly susceptible to modern day slavery and exploitation.

Congress, please support Motion 64 and the other motions in this group with the qualifications that I have outlined. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carole. Does Southern Region accept the qualifications for 63, 65 and 66? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Colleagues, all these four motions are being supported. I will take them all in one vote. All those in favour, please show? Any against? Thank you. That is Motions 63, 64, 65 and 66 have been carried.

*Motion 63 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 64 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 65 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 66 was CARRIED.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING**

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now come to our second group of motions on education and training. I call Motion 58.

### **NATIONAL LIFE LONG LEARNING STRATEGY**

#### **MOTION 58**

##### **58. GMB – NATIONAL LIFE LONG LEARNING STRATEGY**

This Congress registers its concern at the dismantling of the National Life Long Learning website and the return to regionally-led Life Long Learning initiatives, this runs the danger of leading to a post-code lottery in relation to the level of service and access to learning opportunities that members can receive in different parts of the country. There has been little, if any, dialogue with members generally about these changes.

The Congress has previously approved the move to ensuring there was a National Learning Offer available regardless of which region members are in. The access to the National Life Long Learning site and general enquiries were not administered effectively for a long period of time in 2022 and has now been withdrawn and closed.

The loss of the National Website pages on Life Long Learning has also led to the National Learning offer, through the Skills Network being no longer easily accessible. These courses were paid for in advance by the Union previously through the Union Learning Fund. At present how members access this provision is unclear and uncoordinated, all be it we recognise the revised National Life Long Learning Committee are attempting to address this, but it is unclear what support and resource it will have to do so from national Office.



We call upon the Union to develop and publish a strategy that outlines the way forward for Life Long Learning within the GMB, how it is seeking to develop and enable lay-members in any region, to access training, information and guidance on learning. Also clarity on how members can contribute to the strategy and the way forward for Life Long Learning across the GMB as a whole.

It is vital that the GMB retains a meaningful and effective National Life Long Learning offer, accessible to all members in line with GMB Policy as approved by Congress previously.

**Q22 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH  
NORTH WEST & IRISH  
(Carried)**

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Congress and Vice President. I ask for one second's indulgence. This morning some of you will have seen the NUJ strikers outside the BBC Bristol, and I said we would give a quick shout out this morning for them for their campaign to keep news local, so show your support for the NUJ strikers across this country to support and to protect those things that are important. *(Applause)* Solidarity to the NUJ strikers and our brothers and sisters involved in that battle.

Vice President, I move Motion 58. It saddens me to have to come to the rostrum because I love this movement. I have spent 49 years fighting. Next year I will celebrate 50 years in this great Movement, but as many of you will know I have fought for life long learning and for the integrity of learning in this movement and in the country because it is a lifeline for many members. Many of you will know that I fight for the integrity of this Congress and for the rules of this union. I do not flinch from that and I will not be detracted from that.

Congress, it was a motion that helped in 2017 that my branch brought to the region, and my very worthy region which has done massive work on education. My appreciation to the previous regional secretary and the current regional secretary for the great work they have done and do. It's fantastic stuff and it has been a privilege to serve them, hopefully with integrity in doing that. However, last year the Life Long Learning motion that was passed at this conference, the supreme policy-making body of the union, the rule is quite clear. The rule says that this body is supreme. You are supreme. You decide the policy, nobody else, not the General Secretary, and the CEC works within the policies you set. So to find that that policy disappeared overnight almost, without proper consultation, without engagement and to remove the universal offer and the way it operates was wrong and against the rules of this union. It is a key issue of accountability. It is an accountability given by this floor to the top table to do certain things in certain ways. I deeply regret that we have gone back to a post-code lottery whereby each region now can decide what it

believes is best for its members. I agree with that but it should be a universal offer. Why should a member in one region, living across the road from a member in another region, have a different offer. We know, sadly, that some regions will not be as organised in education and training as they should be. We want everybody, because they carry a common union card, to have the universal offer of life long learning, and I want the integrity of those motions restored. I am not asking for gold. I'm asking for the integrity of bringing the report back *here*, to this Congress, about life long learning, to develop the national strategy, and to let you decide, when we know what that strategy is. I don't know what it was, and I was sat on the committee about that.

Therefore, it is time that we spoke up and you assert your authority about the integrity of this conference and the right way to do it. There is no report in the General Secretary's Report about education and life long learning. There is no stall downstairs and no banners, unlike all the previous years. It is not good enough. I fight for that with my heart and with my passion. When they put me in a wooden box, and at least I hope you will carve on it "He tried for the integrity of the Movement". Congress, thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Secunder? *(Formally seconded from the floor)* Motion 60.

## **MENOPAUSE LEAVE MOTION 60**

### **60. MENOPAUSE LEAVE**

Congress notes that on 24 January 2023 the current Government rejected calls for a large scale pilot of menopause leave, as recommended by the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee in their report "Menopause in the Workplace" July 2022" that an amendment to the Equality Act 2010 should incorporate the menopause as a protected characteristic.

Congress notes that GMB members/activists have worked and campaigned tirelessly on raising awareness of the issue of Menopause in the workplace which has included briefings, information, training, etc. and we have provided support and guidance to members and reps in the workplace. Congress notes that the menopause impacts all women including non-binary, and Trans men.

It has been noted that Employment tribunals records indicate that there has been an increase in cases involving menopause, where workers usually cite sex, age or disability discrimination by their employer after experiencing unreasonable treatment as a result of menopausal symptoms. Congress is asked to:

1. Continue to roll out GMB training on the menopause and raising awareness of the impact on those who experience it and how best to support.

2. Work alongside appropriate decision makers to campaign, as far as is practicable, to legislate for menopausal leave to be a protected characteristic.

**E10 EALING BRANCH  
LONDON**

*(Carried)*

TARANJIT CHANA (London): Congress, I move Motion 60: Menopause Leave. Congress, there are over 30 different menopausal symptoms, including hot flushes, heart palpitations, migraines, mood changes, loss of memory and tiredness, but that is not an exhaustive list. The symptoms affect nearly every working person experiencing symptoms of the menopause. Congress, to clarify, this motion includes women, non-binary people and trans men who may also experience the menopause.

This Government's position in not ensuring that menopause is a priority is a missed opportunity. For too long, those who experience the menopause have faced stigma, shame and dismissive attitudes. It is also telling that the language used by this Government of the menopause excludes many who do not identify as women but still experience the menopause. Instead, this Government encourages employers to be compassionate and flexible to the needs of their employees. We know that if you leave workers' rights and entitlements to the discretion and compassion of employers, of bosses, that discretion, encouragement or compassion is never in the interests of us, the workers. Employees who have high volumes of workplace absences due to workers having to take menopausal leave, is shown as sickness rather than be recognised as menopausal leave. This Government offered reduced HRT for 12 months from April 2023, "Get back to work" and "Take your pills strategy". This excludes many who cannot afford HRT, even at the reduced rates or cannot HRT or do not want to. Congress, let's continue to roll out the GMB training on the menopause and campaign to legislate menopausal leave to be a protected characteristic. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

VICKY HOOD (London): I am seconding Motion 60 on Menopausal Leave. The menopause, to me, still feels like a long way off, and I am so glad because menopausal people in this country are so often ridiculed and maligned for experiencing natural human bodily changes.

Research by the Fawcett Society found that one in 10 women aged between 45 and 55 have left employment because of menopause symptoms. We are losing women from the workforce because we still refuse to talk about women's health openly and address issues fairly. The same research found that, on average, 14% of menopausal women say that they have reduced their hours and 8% have not applied for a promotion. Of course, trans and non-binary people also experience the menopause, and there are no stats on this because there is so little knowledge about and care for transgender health in the UK medical systems.

When women and trans people stand back from work because of the menopause, we not only lose their years of skills, expertise and talents, but we also lose female role models, not only from our workforce but our Movement as well, and nobody wins except the old guard.

I have been really fortunate in my working life to have had support and leadership from some incredible women. I am talking about Linda, Faisa, Julie, Carol, Joanne, Julie no. 2 and Carol no. 2. Without them, I would never have had the ambition, drive and confidence that I have today. That is to say nothing of the women who I am privileged enough to share the stage with this week, to hear them speak and sing as well.

Congress, our recommendation is to make menopausal leave a protected characteristic. Recommendations made by the Cross Party Women and Equalities Committee were rejected by the Government this year, apparently in part it could discriminate against disabled men. I am so sick of the excuse by those in power that improving the rights of one group discriminates against another.

Congress, in 20 years I don't want us to face the same stigma, shame and discrimination that my fore mothers have fought against. If I do face that, as well as the knowledge and skill to challenge, I want the legal protections to be in place so with the backing of my union I can hold my employer accountable. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vicky. I now call June Minnery to give the qualification.

JUNE MINNERY (CEC): President and Congress, June Minnery speaking on the motions for the CEC. The CEC is asking North West & Irish Region to withdraw motion 58. Our life long learning strategies must be cost effective. They must also be affordable and relevant to our industrial

priorities. As set out in the CEC's written stance to the region, we cannot just enter into agreements to provide courses at significant financial cost to the union and to our members that have little uptake.

Congress, the CEC fully supports the union's learning fund, but that money has now gone and our overwhelming focus must be on making our union affordable to its members. We also disagree with the motion's statement that regional initiatives will lead to a post code lottery. To the contrary, we believe that the regional initiatives will lead to training that is more industrially relevant to our members.

The CEC is supporting motion 60 with qualifications. We welcome the motion's calls for enhanced protections against discrimination linked to the menopause. It is long-standing GMB policy to campaign for the enactment of section 14 of the Equality Act to permit dual discrimination cases.

We note that the House of Commons' Women and Equalities Committee Report, as referred to by the motion, said that any new protected characteristics of the menopause will need careful drafting and consultation, and that that assessment would take place after section 14 was enacted.

Our qualification is that our focus should be on securing the right to bring dual discrimination cases and the call for a new protected characteristic should be considered in the light of the effectiveness of the new system.

We also have concerns about opening up the Equality Act to amendment now, which could enable the current Tory Government to roll back equalities laws with enormous and negative consequences for our members. We should pursue change to the Equality Act when there is no longer a political environment that poses a risk to our members.

Finally, the motion may, inadvertently, describe non-binary people and trans men as women. Although we appreciate that this appears an accident in the drafting of the motion, we wish to qualify the motion and clarify that women, non-binary people and trans men may all experience the menopause.

The CEC is asking that you support motion 60 with the qualifications that I have outlined. The CEC also asks that motion 58 be withdrawn, and if not

withdrawn asks delegates, please, to vote against the motion when they go to vote. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, June. I am going to take motion 60 first.

A DELEGATE FROM THE FLOOR: Point of order. I want to reply to the CEC speaker.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No. There is no reply to a CEC speaker. I will come back to you in a minute. I will take motion 60, first. Does London accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. That is being supported. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Back to motion 58. I have been informed that the speaker moved the motion and also seconded it himself. You cannot second a motion yourself. The region was not supporting this motion. No seconder came up from the region so that motion falls. Thank you.

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): On a point of order, Vice President.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: All right.

KEVIN FLANAGAN: That's amazing! Absolutely amazing! There were calls on this floor for a seconder, and it was seconded. I am speaking without regional support, but they are trying to bury it because they want us to deny your legal rights under the rule book to have this motion debated properly and to restore the integrity of what we are about. I love this movement. I've no battle on the top table. I'm only asking for a strategy to be brought back. I am not committing you to costs. Just bring the strategy back and have it voted on properly at this supreme body. You are the supreme delegates. You decide, but now they are shutting me down completely. They've never asked for why others weren't seconded before. It's convenient and that is not acceptable. I am sure I heard other voices seconding that motion, and I am speaking without regional support. I ask you to support that motion, Congress, because it is your right to assert the authority in the right way in love of this Movement. I am not against you. It is in love of this Movement and the rules of this Movement that I feel passionately about it. Thank you, honorary President. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Congress does make the rules and that is the rule they made and I am trying to adhere to the rules as best I can. They say it has to be seconded by someone else. No one else

seconded it so the motion falls. That is unless Congress says different. Does Congress want this motion to be put forward? Please show hands. Right. Congress has spoken. First of all, the CEC is asking you to oppose this motion. All those in favour, please show? (*Shouting from the floor*) Let me just explain again. The CEC is asking you to oppose this motion, so I have got to take for and against. To put it right, if you are opposing it, you vote against. Is that all right? To oppose it you vote against. All those in favour, please show.

TARANJIT CHANA (London): A point of order. Can you just clarify, because people are getting confused? When you say "In favour of", is it in favour of the CEC's position or in favour of the motion going to the floor? I think that needs to be clarified. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: When the CEC asks you to oppose a motion, to oppose it you vote against it, not for it. Is that clear? To vote for this motion, you are voting for the motion. To vote against it, you are voting with the CEC to oppose it. Is that all clear now? (*Shouting from the floor*) You are not clear? How would you like it to be? (*Laughter and incomprehensible shouting from the floor*) That's what I am telling you: All those in favour of the motion, please show? All those against the motion, please show? That is carried. (*Cheers and applause*)

*Motion 58 was CARRIED..*

*Motion 60 was CARRIED.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING**

### **MOTION 219**

#### **EDUCATION FUNDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

##### **219. EDUCATION FUNDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

This Congress calls for Government to increase spending per pupil in Northern Ireland from £6,300.00 to a minimum of £6,700 which would be equal to each pupil in England.

It is a matter of record that Education Funding in NI is the lowest of the countries within UK.

£6,700 for pupils in England

£6,600 per pupil in Wales

£7,600 per pupil in Scotland

When extrapolated out, funding in Northern Ireland is approximately £108 million lower based on spending per pupil than in England.

#### **W80 WESTERN EDUCATION BRANCH NORTH WEST & IRISH**

*(Carried)*

KAY DOHERTY (North West & Irish): Congress, I am moving Motion 219. Funding in Northern Ireland has always been less per child than in England and Wales. The latest analysis which compares schools across the UK, the IFSS, the Institute for Fiscal Student Studies, said that Northern Ireland spends a similar amount to England and Wales per pupil in 2023. The Education Authority in Northern Ireland faces an unprecedented funding gap of more than £200 million in 2023/2024. They have been warning in recent months of the impact this will have on core services and ultimately on our children and young people. But the current reality is that the Education Authority has seen a real term's reduction in its annual budget of £150 million between 2011 and 2023. What this means in practical terms is that if the budget in place in 2011 were simply uplifted each year in line with inflation, the budget would be £150 million greater per annum than it actually is.

In addition to this, EA has delivered cost savings of almost £120 million since 2015. The current unprecedented funding challenges follow 10 years of under-investment in education and ever-increasing demands. For example, increasing pupil numbers, and proportionately we have had the largest school population and the lowest education spend per pupil in the UK up to 2019. The Education Authority has, reluctantly, agreed to cuts of £14 million, but has said no to around £5.5 million of cuts. Decisions to reduce expenditure by more than £200 million will impact every child in Northern Ireland and will also have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable and those from socially deprived areas.

While the Stormont Assembly remains collapsed, it was left to the Secretary of State,

Chris Heaton-Harris, to set the region's budget. Well, uncertainty has now become reality for children in Northern Ireland. Schemes have already been scrapped, starting with our for children in Northern Ireland. Schemes have already been scrapped, starting with our *Healthy, Happy Minds*. Engaged programmes to help children with their learning post pandemic has gone. Hunger payments have gone. Extended school hours that supported breakfast and homework clubs, sport, art and drama have gone. Crossing patrols have gone. The scheme to provide digital devices to disadvantaged pupils has gone. The scheme to build new school buildings and school extensions has been paused. Support staff, already facing redundancies, for the most vulnerable children with special needs, may not even have a place in the school. SEND pupils with a statement have increased by 59.7% from 13,898 to 22,198 in 2021/2022. We have seen



increased levels of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage higher than the other UK nations. Coupled with the legacy of the conflict, we must intensify the level of basic needs among children and the necessity for schools to meet these in order for children to be able to maximise their full potential.

This is all related to the fact that there is an insufficient education budget coming into Northern Ireland. This is the frontage of what will be an exceptionally difficult financial year and possibly beyond that.

We call on the Westminster Government to ensure that the education budget keeps in line with inflation as a minimum. Congress, please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kay. Secunder. Could speakers on motion 67 please be ready to speak.

ALAN MALCOLM (North West & Irish): Morning. I am seconding motion 219. Vice President and Congress, I stand before you today to shed on a grave concern that plagues the Northern Ireland education sector, which is the detrimental impact of chronic under-funding by the UK Government. Education is the cornerstone of any prosperous society and it is disheartening to witness the neglect and consequences of inadequate investment. Under-funding has created a ripple effect echoing across Northern Ireland's schools and universities. First and foremost, it hampers the quality of education provided to our children. Insufficient resources, out-dated facilities and overcrowded classrooms become the norm, hampering the potential of every young mind that enters these institutions. Our young children deserve the best education possible but without adequate funding the UK Government are failing them.

Additionally, the scarcity of funding has a direct impact on recruitment and retention of both skilled teachers and non-teaching staff, including classroom assistants, catering staff, cleaners, bus drivers and bus escorts. These talented and hardworking members who possess the passion and dedication to support and shape young lives are forced to seek opportunities elsewhere or face overwhelming workloads due to under-staffing. This leads to a cliff-face decline in the overall standard of education hampering the learning experience and the future prospects of students.

The consequences of under-funding are far reaching and transcend generations. It perpetuates social inequality, restricts social mobility and denies our young people a fair chance to break free of the cycle of poverty.

Congress, the future of Northern Ireland's education sector is at a critical juncture. We must demand increased funding from the UK Government to ensure our children receive the education they deserve so that our young people can flourish. Education is not a luxury but a fundamental right, and it is the duty of the UK Government to provide the necessary resources to nurture the next generation. We need to lobby for change and fight against the detrimental impact of chronic under-funding on Northern Ireland's education sector. Our children's dreams, aspirations and future prosperity depends on them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. Congress, this motion is being supported. All those in favour of the motion, please show? Anyone against the motion, please show? That is carried.

*Motion 219 was CARRIED.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION**

### **RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISING – WHY LGBT+ EMPLOYEES SHOULD JOIN THE GMB MOTION 67**

#### **67. RECRUITMENT AND ORGANISING- WHY LGBT+ EMPLOYEES SHOULD JOIN GMB**

Congress notes that LGBT+ workers have been and are still experiencing verbal and physical bullying from colleagues, customers or service users because of their sexual orientation / identity and some still do not feel confident about reporting homo/bi and transphobic bullying in their workplace.

According to Stonewall:

- more than a third of LGBT staff (35%) have hidden that they are LGBT at work for fear of discrimination.
- Almost one in five LGBT staff (18%) have been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues because they're LGBT.
- Almost one in five LGBT people (18%) who were looking for work said they were discriminated against because of their identity while trying to get a job and one in eight trans people (12%) have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues in the last year.
- Almost two in five bi people (38%) aren't out to anyone at work about their sexual orientation, compared to 7% of gay men and
- 4% of lesbians, while one in four trans people (26%) aren't open with anyone at work about being trans.

Congress notes that GMB has long been a supporter of the LGBT+ movement, and stand in solidarity with us today, and equality in employment and employment rights are key GMB issues.

Congress is called upon to:

1. Continue to actively work with and proactively encourage branches and employers to promote GMB membership for LGBT+ employees.
2. Conduct research of LGBT+ members of their experience in the workplace as well as when seeking employment, including their experiences during interview.
3. Then use and provide this research to GMB branches and Shout groups to help continue to fight discrimination of LGBT+ workers on a national, regional and local level by lobbying Members of UK Parliament, Members of the Senedd, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland and by lobbying employers where GMB is recognised, to take a better public stand against LGBT+ discrimination.
4. Further use the survey evidence to develop a workplace plan for use by negotiators to develop further workplace policies supportive of the LGBT+ community.

## **E10 EALING BRANCH**

### **LONDON**

*(Carried)*

**TARANJIT CHANA** (London): Congress and Vice-President, I am moving motion 67: Recruitment and Organising – Why Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer + Employees should join the GMB.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014 London Region's LGBT+ self-organised group, GMB Shout, having worked tirelessly organising to produce the union's first ever trans toolkit for the workplace, this toolkit was launched on Trans Remembrance Day, it having then been endorsed by the then General Secretary. The launch involved a panel discussion of trans and non-binary activists as well as LGBTQ specialist services. There then followed a powerful and emotional march with our union banner, flags, trans flags and the GMB Shout's inclusive banner along the busy Euston Road to Friends' Meeting House garden space. Then we congregated and a role call of all our trans siblings globally who we lost by being killed or murdered for just being themselves. Trans Remembrance Day takes place every year on 20<sup>th</sup> November.

This historical toolkit has now been revised, led by new trans and non-binary activists. This updated trans and non-binary equality at work toolkit has been rolled out with training being delivered across regions, and also receiving much interest from non-GMB members. This toolkit alone can be used to recruit more lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans and non-binary, queer plus workers into the union. The training is focused on running a workplace campaign enhancing knowledge of trans and non-binary people's issues in the workplace.

Congress, holding events on LGBT+ History Month in February each year and Lesbian Visibility Day in April year, supporting UK Black Pride, are always recruiting LGBT+ workers. So, please, Congress, support this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Secunder?

CATHERINE HANLON (London): Congress, I am seconding motion 67 on why LGBTQIA+ employees should join the GMB. I am speaking from the heart with this motion. When my daughter, Brogan, comes home, who is also a GMB member, and says, "Mum, we are now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Why are people so frightened to come out to their employer?" I said, "It's for different reasons. They may be treated differently; frightened that it may affect their career progression. Some are just old fashioned". However, I have told her to be mindful that not all employers should be tarnished with the same brush.

The GMB goes into all workplaces and recruits new members from all equality strands. The GMB offers more than just membership. They offer support and guidance but, unfortunately, not everyone within the community has a supporting structure at home in which they can confide and discuss issues. The GMB has always been a champion for equality, fairness and helping those who need it. This is why members of the LGBTQIA+ community should join the GMB, whether you need assistance within the workplace on a work matter or simply need someone to talk to. The GMB will be there to listen. Please support our motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Catherine. Thank you. If no one wishes to speak in opposition, I will call Farzana Jumma from the CEC to respond.

FARZANA JUMMA (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification. Congress, GMB stands with all of our LGBT+ members. Our qualification is that we are not able to conduct a full survey of LGBT+ members. However, our members on the National TUC LGBT+ Committee are engaged with the TUC's work on a current survey, and will be reporting on LGBT+ experiences at work. When the TUC research is published, it will be shared amongst GMB regions as a basis for local campaigns. We also encourage all activists to implement workplace campaigns using the current GMB Trans and Non-Binary Equality at Work Toolkit, which shows all LGBT+ workers that GMB stands with them. Congress, with that qualification, please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. London, do you accept the qualification on motion 67? *(Agreed)* Thank you. I will put that motion to

the vote. All those in favour, please show? Any against? Motion 67 is carried.

*Motion 67 was CARRIED.*

## **SOCIAL POLICY: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 8: Social Policy: Equality and inclusion. Can I have the mover of motion 198, please.

### **POLITICAL ATTACKS ON LGBTQ+ PEOPLE MOTION 198**

#### **198. POLITICAL ATTACKS ON LGBTQ+ PEOPLE**

Congress notes:

That attacks on LGBTQ+ people from politicians have increased over the last few years.

- Nadim Zawahri – Suggesting that Teachers should 'out' Trans children to parents
- Liz Truss – Nickname the Minister of Inequalities – stated 'Trans women weren't women' and vowed to gate keep single sex spaces.
- Suella Braverman – Wanted to get rid of this 'Woke rubbish and get back to a country where describing a man or a woman in terms of biology won't lose you your job.
- Nadine Dorries – Stating Trans Women Should be excluded from women's Sport

Congress Believes:

Those who are/were in prominent Government positions have attacked and used LGBTQ+ people as a political bargaining tool to cause division for their own political gain. These are the people who lead our Country, influence our press and pass bills that negatively affect the lives of LGBTQ+ people

Congress Resolves:

That with the support from the CEC we should counter these attacks at every possible chance by;

- Using our social media, press and political affiliations.
- Any Politician who receives GMB support must actively and publicly support our LGBTQ+ policies.
- Ensure all Equality courses are implemented at Branch Level and not just seen as a tick box exercise and used as part of the branch bargaining and campaign work to aid calling out these Politicians.

### **A50 BRANCH WALES & SOUTH WEST (Carried)**

DEAN ISMAY (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, I move motion 198. The attacks on LGBTQ+ people hurt, colleagues. As a queer man, I can safely say that I do not feel safe in this country any more, let alone the feelings of the trans family that we have. Under the current Government, they have vowed to fight the war on woke.

Kerry Badenoch, the Equalities Minister, recently wrote to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission for advice on allowing the Government to change the Equality Act 2010 to define “sex” as “biological sex”. The EHRC’s response is damning. By doing this it removes legal protections for trans people. These are the protections we rely on in the workplace to hold employers accountable over policy, ensuring that their members can work with dignity, free from abuse.

The UN Human Rights Council has also recently visited the UK. They published a report, and the report blasted the UK Government on LGBTQ+ safety, rights and legal protections. Their plans for the new Immigration Bill, which put LGBTQ+ refugees in harms way. The Government have also been dragging their heels on the inclusive conversion ‘therapy’ ban. This ban will ensure that we are not put into a position where so-called practitioners could psychologically abuse us.

The motion refers to several key Tory MPs. However, colleagues, it is worth noting that this is just not an issue with the Tories. Although they threatened to change the Equality Act, some Labour MPs took sides with the gender-critical movement, who continually push fear and try to demonise our trans siblings, but they are part of the problem with how politicians think they can say homophobic or transphobic things without being held accountable.

Keir Starmer does not mention LGBTQ+ rights at all. His silence is deafening, colleagues. We need to be ready to fight to defend the LGBT community. They are our colleagues at work, friends, family and neighbours. Please show solidarity by supporting this motion, colleagues. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

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

JONATHAN STRACHAN-TAYLOR (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, I second motion 198. Congress, LGBTQ+ people in the UK and across Europe still face high levels of discrimination in all aspects of everyday life. Those who are or were in prominent Government positions have attacked and used LGBTQ+ people as a political-bargaining tool to cause division for their own political gain. These are the people who lead our country, who influence our press and pass Bills that negatively affect the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Attacks from politicians have increased over the past few years and comments from political figures, such as Nadim Zawahri, Liz Truss and

Suella Braverman are becoming more commonplace, using LGBT people as a wedge to stoke division. These political attacks on the LGBTQ+ community extend to the erosion of hard-won legal protection. The recognition of same-sex marriages and the right to adopt for LGBTQ+ couples, for examples, are milestones that should be celebrated. However, some politicians seek to undermine these victories by challenging their legality or proposed legislation that allows for discrimination. These attacks not only undermine the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals but also send a dangerous message that discrimination is acceptable. We must not remain silent in the face of such attacks.

It is our duty as a society to stand up for justice, compassion and respect for all individuals regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We must support organisations and activists fighting against these political attacks and amplify their voices and urge our elected officials to prioritise LGBTQ rights as a fundamental aspect of human rights. We must not be bystanders and allow these attacks to continue.

In conclusion, political attacks on the LGBTQ community are an affront to the principles of equality and inclusivity that we hold dear. We must unite against discrimination, challenge harmful rhetoric and work towards a future where every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can live with dignity and without fear. Together, let us create a society that embraces diversity, celebrates love and stands against all forms of oppression. Please support this motion.

*(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jonathan. I call the mover of motion 199.

## **DISABLED PEOPLE STRUGGLING TO ACCESS GP APPOINTMENTS MOTION 199**

### **199. DISABLED PEOPLE STRUGGLING TO ACCESS GP APPOINTMENTS**

This Congress needs to be made aware of the struggles disabled people have trying to access GP appointments.

Yet studies show 55 local Healthwatch from all around the country suggest they have significant issues of concern from some groups of people, particularly for those with hearing, visual and mobility impairments.

In one area of the country 26 out of 39 GP surgeries did not have access for wheelchair users. Problems with making an appointment, due to GP surgery new policy on same day appointments, meaning appointments had to be made over the phone early and gone within minutes of the phone lines open, and at some GP practices insist on phone call only, making it very difficult for deaf people to make appointments.

Problems with communication, in one County in the heart of England, only 1 out of 5 used basic sign language, this making it extremely difficult to communicate due to shortages of BSL translation services. We call on the CEC to address this situation and to look at taking it to the Shadow Health Minister for further investigation.

**W87 WIGAN BRANCH  
NORTH WEST & IRISH**  
*(Carried)*

JOE SMITH (North West & Irish): I move motion 199: Disabled People Struggling to Access GP Appointments. Congress, we have all heard the excellent speeches from our delegates on social policy, NHS and health issues. The public is having huge problems in trying to fix appointments at local GP practices. It has become a normality since the Covid pandemic that data analysts have become very concerned because of digitalisation of your family doctor services. It has left many people struggling to make appointments.

It is a much bigger problem for our older, vulnerable and disabled people in our society. The simple needs of trying to make an appointment are not available. One answer is to ring before 8 am. That is like winning the Lottery. It is just not good enough. It needs changing sooner, not later.

Research shows that in one county in central England 26 out of 39 surgeries don't have wheelchair access. The websites of many GP surgeries have conflicting information on accessing services. They had limited or no information on how to access interpreters on some websites. Blind people have been asked to fill out forms to get a white cane. Websites and social media information could also not be read on screen readers, making it hard for people with visual impairments to access information online. Some GP surgeries expect people with hearing loss to book appointments over the phone. These barriers can prevent people from accessing vital support for their disabilities or health concerns.

The answer is that the most vulnerable people in our society do not know what to do. I recently underwent a hip operation. It was cancelled three times and the fourth time I was lucky. It took 72 hours in and out. It was an absolutely excellent service. However, what was concerning me on being discharged from hospital was what happens if I get a problem once I've gone home? Unfortunately, I did have a problem. Then I tried to win the Lottery. For the first two days I tried to make an appointment at the hospital. I failed. Yes, I could go and flood our emergency hospital and put the pressure on our underpaid nurses and our underpaid paramedics.



That's the easy way out of it. But then I went to my local walk-in centre. I had to be treated three times on three separate days. This is absolutely no joke! The total time I was waiting to be treated over the three days was more than 24 hours. I had to go for specialist treatment and I had to go 20 miles within my county on public transport to get the treatment.

I have 100 per cent support for our NHS, but 13 years of Tory Government has destroyed our NHS to the verge of collapse. I call on the GMB to speak to the Shadow Secretary for Health and Social Care, to lobby the Government and get this message across before it is too late. Please support. *(Applause)*

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

WILLIAM PLIMLEY (North West & Irish): Congress and President, I second motion 199. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Congress, it has become clear across the whole of the country that disabled and able-bodied people are struggling to access GP appointments. It is also clear that more GPs are advertising their private surgeries on social media. People are waiting up to 12 hours or more for treatment in our hospital A&E departments, and this is putting a huge strain on our emergency services simply because people cannot get a doctor's appointment. The negative effect from GP surgeries when trying to make contact is only escalating the problem, disabled, elderly and vulnerable people do not know where to turn to for help. There is a lack of translated material resulting in misinformation. Information is not always in the correct format and individuals must often rely on friends, family or carers to translate for them. There is often a lack of staff support and training in GP surgeries. Communication is often missing. Blind people's names are being called out to visit the doctor but with no help and assistance to guide the person to the doctor. Deaf and hard-of-hearing people are suffering similarly as they cannot hear their names being called out.

Congress, it became clear during the recent junior doctors' strike that GPs were being offered up to £200 per hour, which is at least double the normal working rate to work in A&E. Some hospital trusts in London were offering to pay GPs up to £2,400 for a 12-hour shift.

The old NHS system is broken, failed by 13 years of Tory government. We need the GMB to put pressure on the Shadow Minister for Health and have a strong campaign to save our NHS. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bill. Perfect timing. I call the mover of motion 203, please.

**MOVE TO EQUAL PAY FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL SENIOR FOOTBALL TEAMS**  
**MOTION 203**

**203. MOVE TO EQUAL PAY FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL SENIOR FOOTBALL TEAMS**

Congress welcomes the first steps taken by the Football Association (FA) to increase the money paid to women's teams competing in the women's FA Cup as called for by Congress last year.

The success of the England Women's National team in the EURO 2022 led to a massive rise in the profile of women's football. This success should lead to a positive boost to participation and attendances at all levels and more broadcasting coverage for women's football across the nations of the UK. In particular BBC, Channel Four and S4C with their public services remit should develop serious and ongoing live and highlights broadcasting of women's football.

Congress calls on the FA and the other home FAs to follow the example set by the FA of Wales in introducing equal pay for men and women players playing for their senior international teams. Working with the broadcasting companies they should also work towards equalising, where viable, the money paid to teams competing in their respective FA Cups for men and women.

**B10 BARKING BRANCH**  
**LONDON**  
(*Carried*)

GAVIN DOWNEY (London): Congress and President, I move motion 203 on Equal Pay in Football. We welcome Congress letting us debate this subject after raising it at Congress last June. Since then, you will note that our Lionesses, England's winning women's football team, went on to win the Euros, beating Germany at Wembley in 2022. Their win inspired thousands of girls, so much so that the attendance at this year's Vitality Women's FA Cup Final between Chelsea and Manchester United at Wembley in May broke all records.

As a union, we fully support equal pay and our labour rights' argument is a good enough reason for national football associations to pay their men and women's team the same amount. This is long overdue. We need to follow the great example coming from the Football Association of Wales, who agreed equal pay. The Welsh Men's Senior Team agreed to a 25% pay

cut to enable a 25% rise for the women's team, and that will mean pay parity for those representing Wales until 2027.

Last month, the Scottish Women's National Team announced that they were taking action against the Scottish FA on equal pay and conditions, fully funded by the Professional Football Association of Scotland. We will await the outcome. It is shocking that it is only last year that the United States' Women's Team reached a \$17.7 million settlement with US Soccer after a hard fought six year legal battle over pay. Let's call on the English Football Association to get into the right century and follow Wales to full equality for men and women in the money paid to teams competing in their respective FA Cups. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gavin. Secunder?

CATHERINE HANLON (London): Congress, I am seconding motion 203 on equal pay for football. There should be no room of any type of prejudice in sport or other walks of life. Last year our Lionesses, the England team, after their win, used their success and media platform to write to the Government pointing out that only 63% of British girls play football in school PE lessons, and asked for more investment in girls' football in schools so that every girl has a choice.

We need to look at the structures to enable women and girls in communities to access pathways and to be talent spotted. Congress, our girls and women need equal access to excel in football as we have proven we can win trophies. Women in football need to be visible on the pitch and in the boardroom. These are our union's fundamental principles. It is all about work in equal value. Our ladies play the same amount of time on the pitch, they train just as hard and yet they are not being paid the same.

We understand that FIFA has agreed that women will have equal pay to the men, but this will take seven years to go through the process. We also need to secure this legacy and deliver equal access to sport for women and girls by shaking up the curriculum and providing equal sporting opportunities to girls. Congress, please vote "Equal play, equal pay". Support our motion and respect for all women in sport. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Catherine. Goodness, we've had singing and props. It's all going on today, isn't it? I call the mover of emergency motion 3, please.

## **EQUALITY ACT AMENDMENT EMERGENCY MOTION 3**

### **EMERGENCY MOTION 3: EQUALITY ACT AMENDMENT**

On Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April it emerged that the Equality Minister Kemi Badenoch had asked the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for advice on the “benefits or otherwise” of amending the Equality Act to define sex as “biological”.

Currently, the [Equality] Act protects trans people from discrimination based on both sex and ‘gender reassignment’, regardless of whether they have undergone medical transition or hold a Gender Recognition Certificate.

It can allow trans people to access single-sex spaces such as [domestic violence] shelters, bathrooms, and hospital wards.

The proposed change would remove a legal protection for trans people and encourage discrimination.”

The EHRC responded with advice to Kemi Badenoch that redefining ‘sex’ in the Equality Act to mean ‘biological sex’ would “create rationalisations, simplifications, clarity and/or reductions in risk for maternity services, providers and users of other services, gay and lesbian associations, sports organisers and employers”.

Should the government go ahead with this change it would not only discriminate against Trans people but other LGBTI+ people like those who are Intersex. It would also give the government the green light to make further changes to the Equality Act to weaken protection for those who have a protected characteristics under the current Equality Act.

Also it should be noted that the propose change could lead to conflict with United Nations as UN makes it clear on their website that LGBTQI+ people should be “Free and Equal, NOT Criminalized”, and “Deeply-embedded homophobic and transphobic attitudes, often combined with a lack of adequate legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, expose many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people of all ages and in all regions of the world to egregious violations of their human rights”.

GMB Union should take the following action.

Mount an immediate campaign to highlight what the Tories are doing.

Urge the TUC to get all unions to join forces to campaign against the Tories proposal to change the Equality Act which will affect the LGBTI+ community.

Urge the Labour Party and Keir Starmer and other political parties to stop these changes taking place.

Urge the Labour Party when they are next in government to give more protection for the LGBTI+ community and strengthen the Equality Act.

This isn’t about safe spaces for women, this is about protecting the rights of LGBTI+ people and those who are currently protected under the Equality Act.

### **BRANCH G36 SECURITY REGION SOUTHERN**

*(Carried)*

PAUL SONY (Southern): Congress, I move emergency motion no. 3: Equality Act Amendment.

Congress, as this motion clearly states, the Tories are slowly planning to take this country backwards on LGBT rights by changing part of the Equality Act. Once they see that they can get away with changing one part of the Equality Act, they will see it as an opportunity to change other parts of the Equality Act. It will not only affect LGBTIA+ people, but others who have protected characteristics as defined by the Act.

The right wing will say that women and LGBT people are divided. It is not true. My sister is a member of the GMB National Equality Forum, Hayley Maxwell, who works in the women's sector in Scotland, told me that the biggest threat to women's safer spaces is Government under-funding for specialist services. In Northern Ireland Women's Aid gets no core funding from the Government. In Scotland, a Government funding review is threatening the national helpline. In England and Wales, a review has shown that the women's sector is under-valued and under-funded.

The Tories are trying to hide the right-wing's lack of funding by distracting us with a culture war of nonsense, trying to split us against our sisters, brothers and siblings. This is about the Tories disliking LGBT people. We are here to protect the rights of LGBTI people and those who are currently protected under the Equality Act. So, no doubt if the Tories get away with targeting LGBT people, they would target disabled people next to reduce the cost of paying disability benefits and so on.

Trans people are part of the LGBT family. So, you Tories and certain people and outlets in the media, get your facts straight, if you know how to do it, that is. Stop attacking the LGBTI communities. We just want to be treated with dignity, respect, equally and fairly because we are humans.

This Congress calls upon the GMB to take the following action: Mount an immediate campaign to highlight what the Tories are doing; urge the TUC to get all unions to join forces to campaign against the Tories proposal to change the Equality Act which will affect the LGBTI+ community; urge the Labour Party, Keir Starmer and other political parties to stop these changes from taking place, and urge the Labour Party when they are next in Government to give more protection for the LGBTI+ community and strengthen the Equality Act. Don't let the Tories take away our rights.

For those who are LGBTI, just like myself, I say be part of a family that cares about your rights, both at work and outside work, a family that unites and fights for LGBTI people and others. GMB Union is a family that fights to protect rights for all, a trade union family for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am proud to be part of the GMB family.

Finally, I want to thank all those in Congress and regions for supporting me with this motion. I am proud of you all from the bottom of my heart.  
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Paul. Secunder, please?

CHRISTINA DAVIES (Southern): Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. I am seconding emergency motion no. 3: Equality Act Amendment. The Tories are not interested in protecting those who are in the minority, like our LGBTIA+ and others who have protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act. Otherwise they are proposing to change part of the Equality Act.

The Tories have always had an issue with those who are protected by the Equality Act. The Tories are just giving in to the right-wing media when they have an issue with those who are in a minority. They are taking us backwards and not forwards in terms of protecting our members. Inclusion is not at the heart of our union. We must fight to protect our members. We must act now. Please support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tina. If no one wishes to speak in opposition, I will take Fiona Heneghan from the CEC to respond.

FIONA HENEGHAN (CEC): Thank you. Good morning, President and Congress. I would like to say thank you, so much, to Paul Sony who I am very proud of. He is also from the Southern Region. It was tough to get that motion through, and you did it. So, we are proud of you. Thank you.

My name is Fiona Heneghan, and I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. Congress, the CEC is supporting motion 198 and emergency motion 3 with a qualification. The continuing attacks on our trans and non-binary siblings in the media and some politicians are oppressive, regressive and they threaten the safety of our members. GMB stands with our trans and non-binary members, and we condemn transphobia in the strongest terms. We are committed to campaigning alongside the trans community.

Our qualification on motion 198 is that while we will continue to use our political influence, we will prioritise workplace-based organising. We encourage all branches to engage with the trans and non-binary toolkit and contact your regional equality officers and regional LGBT+ strand leads for support in running local campaigns.

On emergency 3, we recognise that there is an attempt by the Tories to remove existing legal protections for our members, and to encourage division and discrimination against trans and LGBT+ people more widely.

As the motion rightly states, there are risks to fundamental protections if the Equality Act was opened up under the current Government. The CEC's first qualification is to note that the timing of any moves to open up the Equality Act for amendment must receive careful consideration. We seek an assurance that the Government of the day will act only to protect and strengthen this legislation, not weaken it.

Our second qualification is that the motion's call for an immediate campaign to be discussed in more detail by the National Equalities Forum. The CEC also restates GMB support for both inclusion and women's services and safe spaces. GMB will not stand for the Tories continuing attacks on our trans and LGBT+ comrades. We urge the entire trade union Movement to stand against this, too.

The CEC is asking that Congress supports both motions with qualifications. I thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Fiona. Does Wales and South West accept the qualification on motion 198 and Southern on emergency motion 3? *(Agreed)* I can put all those to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? So, 198, 199, 203 and emergency motion 3 are all carried.

*Motion 198 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 199 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 203 was CARRIED.*

*Emergency Motion 3 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Before I introduce the next speakers, can Composite 13 and motions 173 and 177 be ready to speak after the next slot.

## **GLASGOW APPLE STORE REPS**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it is now my great pleasure to introduce onto the stage three of our GMB reps in Glasgow Apple store, who represent our members in the first ever unionised Apple store in the UK. Please give a warm welcome to the stage to William Gibson, Amy Garrett and Christopher Howell. *(Applause)*

WILLIAM GIBSON (GMB Scotland): Good morning, Congress. I am William Gibson, Scotland Region and GMB member of the Glasgow Apex branch and a GMB rep in the first unionised Apple store in the UK. *(Applause)* I'm a first-time visitor and first-time speaker. *(Cheers and applause)* On behalf of our members, thank you for the invitation to Congress, and thank you for giving us the support that we needed to achieve recognition. We are very excited to join you all. If you said to me even a year ago that I would be standing here today speaking to you all, I would have found it difficult to believe.

Like many young workers, up until last year I had never worked in a unionised workplace. I have worked in a mixture of retail, hospitality and the events sector, all of which have lower trade union representation and membership than in the public sector and other industries. There is a lack of awareness of the function and importance of trade unions, which is certainly widespread in these sectors. Even for someone like myself who, prior to our recognition campaign, supported trade unions and understood the importance of their role, I was entirely unaware of how to organise my own workplace. For a long time I did not think it would be possible. Yet when I asked the question of my colleagues as to whether they would want to unionise, I was surprised by the massive levels of support. After realising that we had the necessary support to be able to unionise, I met with GMB organiser, John Slaven and activist Halley Maxwell, who took me through the process of how we could achieve union recognition. At this point, I just want to say a massive thank you to John Slaven, who has played a vital role in our unionising effort. *(Applause)* He has put up with a number of anxious late-night calls from myself and has provided unparalleled support to our members. However, our organising efforts were also such a success because we utilised a modern approach to unionising, utilising digital platforms for sharing resources, information and updates on our progress. Having a mixture of in-house and Zoom information sessions and utilising social events that foster community and solidarity among our members, I can certainly say that GM Bowling was a highlight for me.



Young people like myself and private-sector workers in retail and hospitality are not averse to unionising. They are ready and willing but lack the knowledge on how to organise and the significance of recognition in the workplace. Driven by a desire for justice, many of us are drawn to companies and organisations which appear to align with social justice movements. There are many young workers who are employed in places which actively celebrate Pride Month, International Women's Day and they may support movements like Black Lives Matter, as well as climate, disability, and other activists. It would appear in workplaces like this that the protection of workers' rights through trade unions would be the logical next step, yet opposition to unionisation efforts appear to be the default response.

There is much work to be done with young workers in non-unionised sectors and industries, but there is certainly no lack of desire. Workers know their workplace best, and in many cases, it is the same issues which face all retail and hospitality workers, such as poor scheduling, low pay and precarious work.

I am delighted to be part of the movement to change that as part of the GMB. Although young workers like myself are concerned with social-justice causes, such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ liberation, the climate crisis and tackling the legacies of racism, colonialism, and white supremacy, often face a battle on two fronts. On one front we are fighting for justice from our employer and, on the other front, within the union itself. The representation of young people at this Congress speaks for itself, and the language sometimes used to refer to adults in their late 20s and 30s as 'young ones' can fail to take account of the valuable contribution that young workers make.

Our biggest challenge in unionising workplace was the Monaghan Report, which was used as a way to discredit the GMB. I think it is worth noting the great progress that has been made in the necessity of the report. However, we must not become complacent, patting ourselves on the back for the progress that we have made so far. As a trade union hoping to engage younger workers, we must continually renew our commitment to fight discrimination, harassment, and inequality in all of its forms. We must also be future-minded, prioritising efforts to tackle the climate crisis as it remains one of the greatest threats to young workers' job security in the future.

So, join me today in taking a moment to remind ourselves of the necessary work which lies ahead, to leave Congress this week with new zeal and passion and to remember why it is we do what we do, which is for the sake of justice, for the cause of the working class and for all those who suffer under capitalism. Thank you, Congress. *(A standing ovation)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Could we have the mover of Composite 13 and motion 173 to the front, please?

## **POLITICAL: THE LABOUR PARTY**

### **LABOUR PARTY MIXED ECONOMY POLICY MUST MAKE PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH AND INVESTMENT TOP PRIORITY AND PLAN WITH THE TUC A VERSION OF THE USA INFLATION REDUCTION ACT COMPOSITE 13**

*(Covering motions:*

*171. Labour Party Mixed Economy Policy must make productivity growth and investment top priority – London Region*

*172. Labour and TUC should plan a version of the USA Inflation Reduction Act in the UK – London Region)*

### **COMPOSITE 13: LABOUR PARTY MIXED ECONOMY POLICY MUST MAKE PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH AND INVESTMENT TOP PRIORITY AND PLAN WITH THE TUC A VERSION OF THE USA INFLATION REDUCTION ACT**

This Congress calls on the Labour Party to recognise and take steps to repair the huge damage to the UK economy and to public services caused by the unnecessary economic austerity implemented by the coalition and Tory governments since the 2010 election. This damage has been compounded by the impact of the pandemic on the economy.

Austerity led to cuts in investment in infrastructure development and in public sector facilities and damaging cuts in day-to-day public spending on front line services. It is one of the reasons for example why we don't have new nuclear power stations on stream providing our own reliable electricity capacity.

Most damaging of all it halted the annual growth rate of productivity. In the decade between 1997 and 2007, during the last Labour Government, the UK enjoyed the second-highest productivity growth of any G7 economy (1.8 per cent), behind only the US. In the post 2008 crash decade of the coalition and Tory government up to 2019, productivity growth slumped to the second-weakest performance (0.4 per cent), ahead of only Italy.

Since then, there has been an incredibly severe impact on the economy of the pandemic. This has hit small and medium sized business very hard and the impacts on jobs and day to day services and prices across the economy are still unwinding.

Productivity growth is the ultimate driver of higher GDP and living standards. Congress calls on the Labour Party to make clear to the electorate that it is not prepared to accept a continuing decline in the economic prospects for the UK and that the restoration of growth and productivity will be the number one priority of the Government.

The electorate is ready for a change in Government.

Congress calls on the Labour Party, with the help of the TUC, to use the time between now and the next election to study the operation of President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act in the USA to promote industrial development, productivity growth and new jobs and Labour should make a manifesto commitment to promote a UK version of the Act early in the next Parliament.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 was signed into law on August 16, 2022. It contains \$500 billion in new spending and tax breaks. The industrial priorities set out in the Act are to promote investments in domestic manufacturing capacity, encourage procurement of critical supplies domestically or from free-trade partners, and jump-start R&D and the commercial development of leading-edge technologies such as carbon capture and storage, clean hydrogen and electric cars. It also requires recipients of many funding streams to demonstrate that they will bring well-paying union organised jobs to deprived areas and areas requiring levelling up.

The Act also allocates money on measures to increase government revenue by tackling corporate tax avoidance and the use of tax havens and introduces an excise duty on companies buying back their own shares.

All the priorities set out in the Act for investment and development are in line with those set out by Congress over the years. One such priority is the development of 30,000 jobs in the UK in new steel fabrication yards to build the 8,000 towers and foundations for the giant offshore wind turbines needed to meet net zero by 2050. Labour and the TUC should assess how to emulate the Biden Act to ensure that these jobs are brought back to the UK to fabricate 20 million tonnes of UK produced steel - rather than as now being based in the Far East fabricating Chinese steel.

We call on the Labour Party to offer a manifesto that is committed to using the full powers of the state to halt economic decline and promote economic development and prosperity. Labour must promise to emulate the Biden administration in the USA with a UK version of the Inflation Reduction Act on state aid as one of its measures to secure economic development.

Congress notes that EU is objecting to the US Government's use of state aid to promote domestic industrial development and jobs. Rather than support this EU objection Labour and the TUC should support and study the operation of this new long overdue Act.

The mixed economy has been the hallmark of Labour since its foundation. The electorate knows this. In these current economic circumstances advocacy of the mixed economy is one of Labour's greatest appeal to the electorate. The language of austerity and the prescriptions of the neoliberal small state philosophy should be rejected outright as the electorate has more than enough of it from the Tories.

Congress calls on the Labour Party to make a manifesto commitment to bring forward a UK version of the Act to use the mixed economy for new jobs, productivity growth and industrial development.

*(Carried)*

DAVE KENT (London): Congress, I move Composite 13, which is very snappily entitled: Labour Party mixed economy policy must make productivity growth and investment top priority and plan with the TUC a version of the USA Inflation Reduction Act. *(Laughter and applause)* You can tell that this is a very good motion because it spreads out over a whole page on the agenda.

This composite comprises motions from two London Region branches, neither of which were able to send a delegate to Congress. I am grateful to the branches for assisting me in drafting my speech. Congress, as has been said repeatedly, both at GMB Congresses in the past and elsewhere, austerity is a political choice, with the ruling class using it as a tool to keep the working class in its place. This composite seeks to encourage a future Labour Government to turn the tide by rejecting austerity, by promoting productivity growth and by making investment in public services and industrial development the highest priority.

I will summarise this composite as follows. If carried at this Congress, this composite will instruct the GMB to call on the Labour Party and the TUC: (1) To carry out a study into the effects of the USA's Inflation Reduction Act, and (2) To develop a version of that Act which would be suitable for implementation in the UK. If carried at this Congress, this composite will instruct the GMB to call on a future Labour Government: (1) To reverse this Tory Government's cruel austerity measures; (2) To remedy the decline in the UK's economic prospects by restoring growing and productivity and by promoting economic development; (3) To tackle corporate tax avoidance and evasion; (4) To bring back production of wind turbines to the UK, and (5) To implement a version of the USA's Inflation Reduction Act. Please support Composite 13. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Secunder?

KULWANT SINGH-RAIT (London): Congress, I am seconding Composite 13 on Labour Party policies. I am a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Congress, when Keir spoke to the Congress on Tuesday he said that the rest of the world was moving on. Britain just hasn't kept pace with the rest of the world. We need green jobs. Part of this composite talks of the Inflation Reduction Act, which is trying to encourage companies to be greener in manufacturing. We need to develop 30,000 jobs in the UK in new steel fabrication yards to build the eight thousand towers and foundations of the giant offshore wind turbines needed to meet net zero by 2050.

As the mover said, the Labour Party needs to plan a version of the US Inflation Reduction Act in the UK. The Labour Party and the TUC should assess, consider and emulate the Biden Act to ensure that these jobs are brought back to the UK to manufacture 20 million tonnes of UK-produced steel, rather than in the Middle East fabricating Chinese steel.

Labour's proposed policy to spend £28 billion a year on green manufacturing subsidies would address the issue that the IRA is addressing in America. The Labour Party and the TUC need to build on these plans. We need packages of incentives and measures to attract investment in greener businesses. We need to build in UK manufacturing. Please support this motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I call the mover of motion 173.

**LABOUR HAS TO DEVELOP A NEW REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL POLICY AS A KEY PLANK IN ITS ECONOMIC STRATEGY**  
**MOTION 173**

**173. LABOUR HAS TO DEVELOP A NEW REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL POLICY AS A KEY PLANK IN ITS ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

Congress calls on the Labour Party to develop and implement its own version of the levelling up agenda for regions and areas of the country where the levels of economic activity and prosperity are well below the levels in London and parts of the Southeast.

Labour should recognise that without coordinated activities and investment by national, devolved and local government with private sector employers, transport undertakings, education and training providers and stakeholders like trades unions economic activity in parts of the country and in particular coastal regions cannot be levelled up. This should be a key insight for the levelling up agenda. Imagine if only a fraction of the costs to the taxpayers of the pandemic could be spent on regional development. A properly resourced regional industrial policy has to be a central plank in the economic strategy of an incoming Labour government.

One of the benefits of not being in the EU single market is that state aid requirement for an active approach to regional industrial development is no longer illegal. The incoming Labour government must take full advantage of this freedom to promote the mixed economy to generate economic activity and jobs. Promoting new sectors and spreading economic development is specifically allowed under WTO rules.

In addition, an incoming Labour government should learn from the experience of Ireland and work out how to use the full range of tax incentives to generate employment and economic activity in areas requiring levelling up while not promoting economically useless tax avoidance.

The Labour Party should have no qualms about adopting the aim of levelling up from the Conservative Party. Labour should develop its own distinctive approach to levelling up. This should include measures to boost the wages of workers in the levelling up areas.

Specifically, it should insist that all workers employed by outsourced contractors doing work for the public sector are paid similar pay and conditions for the in-house workers. This would be a contemporary version of the Fair Pay Resolution abolished by Mrs Thatcher.

Another measure would be to end the effective impunity that employers like Amazon- operating in the levelling up areas- enjoy in undermining the human rights of their employees to join unions and seek collective bargaining agreements to raise wage rates which these employers can afford. Managers found guilty of sacking shop stewards and engaging in anti-union practices should be subject to fines and prison sentences.

Levelling up done properly is a worthy aim and properly presented as a way to boost living standards in low wage areas will be electorally very popular.

**135 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH**  
**LONDON**

*(Carried)*

DENNIS ROSVELGI (London): Congress, I move motion 173: Regional Industrial Policy. The gap between the best of areas in the UK and the poorest one is the highest in the OECD. Is it any wonder that the electorate in the poorest areas want a more balanced UK when the economic differences between areas are so stark? You can call this the closing of the gap between those areas by any name you want, but the target must be levelling up rather than levelling down. Let's settle on a neutral name for the set of policies required to do the job of levelling up. Let's call it "Regional Policy".

We know that Labour plans to borrow £28 billion each year, every year for five years, adding up to a stimulus of £140 billion to speed up green projects to meet the 2050 net zero emission target. It is Labour's biggest single spending commitment.

Congress, it is a very high priority that a very large proportion of this spending has to be to bring well-paid, skilled jobs to the poorest areas of the country. For example, Labour should pick up and deliver the plan developed by GMB Scotland for wind energy, with 30,000 new steel fabrication jobs which are needed to deliver 8,000 offshore wind turbines requiring 20 million tonnes of UK-produced steel. As GMB Scotland spelt out, we don't currently have the steel fabrication capacity in the UK, so without Government intervention to develop UK capacity these steel-fabrication jobs are destined to be delivered in Asia. The delivery of green jobs to former industrial areas and coastal communities across the UK are pivotal to the success of any UK Government's regional policy. The record to date is very poor. One area where new steel-fabrication capacity should be sited is at the now closed second-largest blast furnace in Europe on Teesside, which is now Europe's largest blast furnace site. Five hundred million pounds is needed from this fund to clean up this site so that it can be used for new green jobs. Labour must rebrand this huge £140 billion green spending as being about jobs and industrial development, just as much it is about meeting green net-zero targets. This is what the electorate in the council areas of the east of England, in our region, and other less economically developed areas of the country want to hear about. We want an effective regional policy which can also be seen as an active green policy. We don't want to hear any qualifications about using public subsidies for green policies.

Another example is that to boost pay in the poorest areas. The Government should insist that all workers employed by outsourced contractors doing work for the public sector are similarly paid with similar conditions for the in-house workers. Congress, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dennis. I call the seconder? (*Formally seconded from the floor*) Thank you. I was waiting for that. As nobody is speaking in opposition, I ask John Warcup to speak on behalf of the CEC.

JOHN WARCUP (CEC): President and Congress, I am responding for the CEC on composite 13 and motion 173. The CEC is supporting both motions with a small number of qualifications.

On composite 13 the CEC supports the aims of the motion. We agree wholeheartedly with its call for a UK version of the Biden Inflation Reduction Act. Our qualification is that this policy should be combined with GMB's existing position that the international trade rules must be urgently reformed so that the UK can do more to support industry at home. Unilaterally breaching those rules, as the motion calls for, would put our members' jobs in manufacturing at risk as well as other sectors linked to exports.

On motion 173, the CEC welcomes its calls for a more active industrial policy and against the multi-national employers like Amazon. It must be noted that the Trade and Co-operation Agreement with the EU, which was signed by the Conservative Government, imposes limits to what the UK can do on subsidies and domestic contents. There are also limits under the WTO treatise.

Our qualification is that the UK should be campaigning to change those treatise in the same way that the Biden Administration is campaigning for reform. The alternative of breaking those treatise risks our members' jobs in manufacturing as our exports could be hit with heavy tariffs.

In addition, the CEC believes that the language of levelling up has been tainted by Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak's Government, and we may wish to consider using alternative words. Please support the motions with the qualifications I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. Does London Region accept the qualification on composite 13? (*Agreed*) And on motion 173. (*Agreed*)

Thank you. I can put both of those motions to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Any against? So composite 13 and motion 173 are carried.

*Composite 13 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 173 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 11. I call the mover of Motion 177.

## **POLITICAL: DEMOCRACY & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM**

### **REMOVAL OF BISHOPS FROM THE HOUSE OF LORDS**

#### **MOTION 177**

##### **177. REMOVAL OF BISHOPS FROM THE HOUSE OF LORDS**

This Congress notes that the United Kingdom is unique among Western democracies in giving representatives of religious groups automatic seats in its legislature. Two archbishops and 24 bishops of the Church of England currently have seats as of right in the House of Lords. This is unfair, undemocratic and undesirable.

In addition, the presence of religious leaders amounts to double representation of religious interests as many temporal peers already identify themselves as being religiously motivated, and many retired religious leaders are appointed as peers.

This Congress believes that any serious proposals to reform the House of Lords must address the unjustified privilege of the Bishops' Bench.

After over a century of decline in religious attendance in Britain, the claim that Bishops — or any other religious representatives — speak for any significant constituency is clearly far off the mark. Less than 2% of the British population now attend Anglican services on the average Sunday. By 2050 this figure is forecast to drop to just 0.3% of the population.

Congress also rejects the implication that the bishops somehow provide special moral insights denied to other members of the House. The idea that Bishops or any other 'religious leaders' have any monopoly on issues of morality is offensive to many non-religious UK citizens. Congress contends that those who profess no religion are no less capable of making moral and ethical judgements. Bishops do not have any "special moral insight" unavailable to everybody else. We also believe that neither prayers nor religious oaths should form any part of the proceedings in a reformed House of Lords.

Congress therefore adopts as policy reforming the House of Lords, with the purpose of seeking a secular upper chamber with no specific religious representation whether ex-officio or appointed, whether of Christian denominations or any other faiths. No religion or its leaders should have a privileged role within the UK legislature."

#### **X59 NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH**

##### **LONDON**

*(Carried)*

SCOTT HORNER (London): Congress and President, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am moving motion 177: Removing the Bishops from the House of Lords. We all know that Britain loves its traditions but as trade unionists we know that if something has



been the same for a long time, it does not mean that it should not be changed.

Look around us. Our trade union is a proudly diverse trade union. That is exactly the same for the UK. The UK is a proud, diverse and vibrant country. It is wrong that one religion can hold a unique position in our political system above everybody else. Our Houses of Parliament need to represent what Britain is as a society as a whole, not just one religion. While it promotes one religion, it stops Britain from being a truly representative Parliament. The trade union Movement has a proud history of championing reform and equality. I hope you support this motion. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Scott. It's not easy having to wait for many days before making your first speech. Secunder?

BEN CAMPBELL-WHITE (London): President and Congress, I second motion 177: Removal of Bishops from the House of Lords.

The Anglican Church is established in England and its bishops sit in the House of Lords. Twenty-six out of the 42 dioceses Bishops and Archbishops of the Church of England serve as Lords Spiritual in the House of Lords. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishops of Durham, London, and Winchester all automatically get a seat in the House of Lords. The next 21 are the longest-serving bishops. In other words, there are no Irish bishops, no Welsh bishops, no Scottish bishops, no Jews, no Catholics, no Muslims, no Rastafarians, no Sikhs, no Hindus and no Humanists. It is not fair and it is not representative of a diverse society. It needs reform. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. The CEC is supporting this motion. Nobody has come up to speak in opposition. I will take it to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Any against? Motion 177 is carried.

*Motion 177 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 12.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: JUSTICE**

### **CAMMELL LAIRD 1984**

#### **MOTION 193**

##### **193. CAMMELL LAIRD 1984**

This Congress calls on the GMB to implement immediately the overwhelming decision of Congress '22 to act on the jailing of 37 members for a month in Walton Prison, for carrying out legitimate trade union activity in defence of jobs.

##### **Z15 LIVERPOOL 2 BRANCH**

##### **NORTH WEST & IRISH**

*(Carried)*

EDWARD MARNELL (North West & Irish): Congress, I move Motion 193. I must commend the GMB, both locally and nationally, for the work that they have done over the years regarding the campaign, and especially to Paul McCarthy, our Regional Secretary. I must tell you this story. When we went to Europe, he took me into a bar and he insisted on getting the beer. I didn't argue. But after a couple of beers, I decided to look at the bottles. Mine said "No alcohol". He said, "Okay". I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, you've got to speak in the European Court tomorrow". I said, "One or two won't bother me", but that's Paul McCarthy for you. Do you know what I mean? He's a joker but he's a cracker as well. *(Applause)*

We went to the Court of Appeal and we won. They ruled that the British Government should apologise immediately and reimburse the strikers for loss of redundancy payments and pension rights. They haven't. They actually broke the law. Nothing unusual there, is there?

A couple of months ago a delegation from the 37 went to Parliament to a debate on our fight for justice. Nine Labour MPs spoke brilliantly in favour of our claim, but not one of the six Conservatives present spoke against the claim. Yet the Tory Chairman ruled out our claim without any consultation whatsoever. It's just another case of the Tories abusing the law. We have a commitment from the in-coming Labour Government, but as well as commitment we want action. For those who were here last time, remember this. For those who weren't, it's Tony Blair wearing one of *these* when he was PM. We also had Gordon Brown, who was the Chancellor. I met him in Liverpool. When I put the case to him, he said: "Do you expect me just to write a cheque for 10 grand?" I said, "No; a quarter-of-a-million". *(Applause)*

*This leaflet has been produced by our region, and it sets out all that has gone on. I and the ones in the 37, who are remaining, are eternally grateful for what is being done by the GMB, but no matter what happens we fight to the finish. Thank you.*

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Eddie. It's lovely to see you again. Is there a seconder for the motion? *(The motion was formally seconded from the floor)*

I ask Gordon Richardson to respond on behalf of the CEC, please.

GORDON RICHARDSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to motion 193 on Cammell Laird, which we are supporting with a qualification. Before I start, I would like to dedicate this response to Eddie. Over the years, we have become good friends. He is a prime example of dogged determination, never letting go, always been polite and on top of the game. He has gone through all the right channels. Sometimes he has got on people's nerves a bit, but that is what you need to be as a proper trade unionist. *(Applause)*

The CEC fully supports the campaign to clear the names of all the striking Cammell Laird workers wrongfully imprisoned in Walton Prison and blacklisted for defending their jobs. Justice for the Cammell Laird 37 remains a priority area of our work. Therefore, the CEC's qualification is to confirm, for the record, that we are still committed to implementing composite 14 carried out by Congress last year, and that the action to do so began the week following that vote.

Significant progress has also been made since then. GMB action secured new commitments from the Labour Party that once in Government it will release Government-held documents relating to the Cammell Laird prosecutions and that it will carry out a review into the jailing of striking workers. This pledge was adopted in the *Stronger Together Report* published by the Labour Party Conference, and it will be repeated in the '23 draft policy document.

The GMB will continue to pursue the pledge in Labour's General Election manifesto writing in *Progress*. The GMB action also secured a Parliamentary debate on 7<sup>th</sup> February of this year, which discussed the merits of a public inquiry into the decision to jail strikers. This debate brought the Minister of Justice to face MPs' questions and some of the striking workers were able to attend, including Eddie. The union is now

collating copies of the relevant pages it holds from that time of the dispute. This is in order to obtain legal advice in pursuit of the judicial review called for in composite 14 at Congress of last year. Some new documents have been held by the Government and other bodies have also been identified through these new research efforts. Preparing for the potential legal action takes time and it is important that this work is allowed to proceed so that the GMB can build the strongest possible case. We will continue to update the region as further progress is made.

Therefore, in summary, the CEC is asking for the Congress to support this motion with the qualification set out. This is for Eddie. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: North West & Irish Region, do you agree with the qualification?

*(Agreed)* Thank you. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against. Motion 193 is carried.

*Motion 193 was CARRIED.*

## **INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY, GENERAL**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to Motion 122. Could the mover come to the rostrum, please.

### **TUC SHOULD SEEK REFORMS TO THE ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE RULES FOR COMPANIES OR DITCH A SHAM SCHEME MOTION 122**

#### **122. TUC SHOULD SEEK REFORMS TO THE ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE RULES FOR COMPANIES OR DITCH A SHAM SCHEME**

This Congress calls on the CEC to request that the TUC, on behalf of the whole trade union movement, conduct a thorough investigation into the rules being followed by companies that sign up to the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) movement. This is something of a current fad in the corporate sector and is a “greenwashing” con job on a massive scale.

The aim should be to expose the utter hypocrisy of the current rules that don’t require companies to apply proper labour standards for their own workers and those in their supply chains.

Companies are claiming to be ESG compliant when they source merchandise for example from workplaces in the free trade zones where trades union membership is outlawed and where strikes are put down by permanent lock out of the exploited workers involved.

It is high time that the international trade union movement called time on the utter hypocrisy and cynicism of the ESG movement and its pathetic rules on labour standards. A look at the rules for

environment and governance will also expose the greenwashing and a seal of approval for the status quo for companies on using tax havens to avoid paying taxes etc.

The TUC should seek to get the rules changed to no longer permit labour exploitation and the refusal to abide by international human rights rules on the rights of workers to join unions and seek collective bargaining agreements with their employers to improve their terms and conditions at work.

If the international trade union movement is not able to get these rule changes and ways to get them enforced there should be a concerted effort to ditch the whole concept of a bogus ESG movement and discredit it at every turn. This also goes for the so-called referees who audit companies for their ESG compliance at great benefit to themselves.

#### **L54 LONDON STORES GENERAL BRANCH**

##### **LONDON**

*(Carried)*

ADRIAN STOHR (London): Congress, I am moving motion 122 on ESG rules.

The intention behind the motion is to get a serious effort by the international trades union movement off the ground. As an aside, it is worth noting that there are more than 200 million fellow members across the world to make the environment, social and governance movement to actually work to address low standards in these three areas.

It is fundamentally in the interests of the international trades union movement to get sign-ups and to get governments and corporations to follow a proper set of standards and to agree that adherence to these standards should be regularly and properly audited by independent certified inspectors. Of that, the results should be published in a fully transparent manner. The key words in that paragraph are “proper standards”, “proper auditing” and “independent certified inspections”. Many of the ECG codes in use fall down on one or more of these key requirements. One of the biggest problems is that many ESG codes set out to monitor a wide range of difference performance indicators including CO2 emissions, water usage, impacts on biodiversity, labour treatment, discrimination, inclusion, product safety, marketing practices, supply chain, lobbying, corruption and tax amongst others.

To do this properly is very labour intensive and requires properly trained and qualified, independent certified inspectors. This cannot be done on the cheap. This is where many of the ESG codes have fallen. The referees don't spend the money doing the job properly. They either rely on box ticking or self certification. They certainly don't talk to the workers or trade unions as they go about their inspections.

The results produced are worse than useless in that they give the impression that there has been a proper audit when no inspection has been carried out. On self certification, most of you will be too young to have heard of Mandy Rice-Davies. In the 1960s there was a Parliamentary spy scandal about a government minister by the name of Mr John Profumo, who was alleged to have had an affair with her. In court, when she was told that the Minister had denied the affair, she said, "Well, he would, wouldn't he?"

Congress, we would not expect companies to deny exploiting their workers, wouldn't we? Another problem is that some of the organisations pushing ESG are really only interested in environment issues. Sadly, some of them are prepared to trade off improvements in the carbon emissions with deteriorating human rights' standards. These problems are where the green washing comes from. As the qualification says, the direction of travel has to be to try to make the system work. What the motion calls for in the first instance is for the CEC to request that the TUC, on behalf of the whole trade union movement, conducts a thorough investigation into the rules being followed by the companies that sign up to the environment, social and government movement. Hopefully, this can kick off and a seriously determined action can make the ESG codes work properly for the benefit of the workers and the communities across the globe. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Adrian. Secunder?

BISMILLA MOHAMED (London): President, I am seconding motion 122 on ESG rules. ESG rules are Environment, Social and Governance rules, and all companies should be signing up to a full compliance with these for transparency, accountability and corporate and social responsibility. These rules cover how companies make ethical, socially responsible investments and report on the measures they are taking to impact social society and the environment. However, this should not be a paper exercise. As our motion says, these rules don't go far enough. They should also cover labour standards, human rights issues and the exploitation of workers.

Congress, the aims of the trade union Movement should be all about the economic justice at the heart of everything, and this is why we are asking the TUC to lead on this. Please support our motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: If there is no one to speak against, I will ask Viv Smart from the CEC to respond, please.

VIV SMART (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking in response to motion 122. The CEC is supporting this motion subject to a qualification. We agree that serious reform is needed to the environment, social and governance framework, or ESG. Our qualification is that we should not refuse to engage entirely with ESG. Where we can turn it into our advantage, we should, and those decisions are best taken by our negotiators on a case-by-case basis. This is partly a negotiation issue, and our representatives should be free to pursue the tactics that get the best results for our members. Ultimately, what is needed is enforceable legislation to require companies to uphold better labour and environmental standards, and a co-ordinated international effort to make ESG a meaningful commitment. Congress, please support the motion with this qualification. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Viv. London, do you accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* In that case, I will put that to the vote. All those in favour, please show? All those against? Motion 122 is carried.

*Motion 122 is CARRIED.*

## **GRASP ANNOUNCEMENT**

THE PRESIDENT: I will now ask our National Race Organiser, Tye Nosakhere, to address Congress on the launch of the GRASP scholarship programme.

TYE NOSAKHERE (National Race Organiser): Madam President, General Secretary and Congress, as always it is an absolute privilege to be able to stand in front of so many of you who make our union the strong and incredible force that it is. When I spoke to you almost a year ago, I said to you that it was just the beginning of the work that we need to do to address the fact that for 20 years we are behind schedule when it comes to addressing the issues of race equity and race justice within the GMB but also, crucially, within the workplace.

In order to ensure that we do address it in the way which is absolutely necessary, I have spent time working on projects that I believe will make that difference for us. I only have five minutes, and I promise you that I will stick to those five minutes, but it will take me five hours to thank the people who need to be thanked for the work that I am doing. So, again, I will say, as I said last time, you know who you are; you know how much help you have given me to get to this position, to help me make this possible. So,

from the bottom of my heart, I thank all of those who I cannot thank within the minute that I have left to speak. (*Applause*)

Without love we cannot cure racism. Did you hear what I said? (*Calls of "Yes"*) So respond! Without love we cannot cure racism! (*Applause and cheers*) Racism divides: love unites us. Love brings us together. It is love within a family that allows you to get over the squabbles, the differences, the disagreements and the inevitable battles that you have with siblings and relations. We need to understand, as one of the delegates said, that there is only one race, and within that race, that family of human beings, we are not going to get on all the time! We are not. (*Applause*) But we are still family and with love we will get to the point we need to get to where there are less squabbles, less quarrels and we are able to utilise the force that is necessary to make the real difference that we need to make for those people who we are here to protect in the workplace.

So, my job has been twofold. Try to ensure that we are making that difference in the workplace, as Gary says, making work better, but also making GMB better. (*Applause*) To do that, we need a really important significant word beginning with "T". It's not "Tye" but "Trust". I need you to trust me. Just trust me, please, to make a difference based upon the experience I have and the great help that I am getting from a whole trailer-load of people, be they black, brown, white, gay, straight, non-binary people, who are helping to try and make this work. Trust me, because I've had to learn to trust. I trust my General Secretary, because every time I go to him, he says to me, "I've got your back", and when I look, he's there. When I go to Rhea, and I ask her to trust me, she does. But I need more. I need more from you in terms of trust because we have to get to a point where we stop, as Dennis Brown said, the fussing and fighting, because it is time to unite. (*Applause*)

The next line in the song goes: "*Unity is the foundation of survival*". You've got to let the love come shining through. On the point of shining, the GRASP project, GMB's Race, Achievement, Scholarship Programme, that is designed to enhance and to empower black, Asian and minority ethnic activists, black and brown people, global majority heritage people, or whatever you want to call it. (*Applause*) That is what it is designed to do. On shining, I have said to those who have managed successfully to become that first cohort, you are already stars. We are just going to help you to shine brighter. (*Applause*)



Can I introduce to you, Congress, the stars that are already shining that will be illuminating the GMB in six months from October. Can I introduce them to you. Let me say that not all of them have been able to be here today, but we are a union that represents people, so those who are here will also be representing those who aren't. Okay? So, please, I am going to call them up to the stage one by one. They are going to stand with me, and then I would ask you, if you will, to give your appreciation for the tremendous effort they have made to be part of this programme and the fantastic work they are going to do to transform our union into what we know it must and can be.

First and foremost: Sonia Davies (*Applause*); Davina Brown (*Applause*); Kelvin Amaboyle (*Applause*); Sister Ava Payne (*Applause*); Alison Simon (*Applause*); and Sister Margarite (*Applause*). We are missing from our ranks at the moment Wiswana Limbada. Can we have a round of applause even though she is not here. (*Applause*). Morab Ali (*Applause*). Ali Heydore (*Applause*) and Joyce Solomon (*Applause*).

As part of the work of GRASP, I have had incredible expert help from Rochelle Channer (*Applause*); Terry Smith (*Applause*) and Fazana Jumma. (*Applause*)

We achieve nothing unless we achieve it together; nothing unless we stand together. This is just an example of what we can do. This is just the start of an effort to make sure that we change in a way that includes every single one of you. (*Applause*) There is no union that is doing what we are doing. None. None, none, none, nowhere! None that are putting the money where our mouths are, to invest in six months of time to ensure that *these* people are able to do what we know they can do from their applications that they have put in showing how great they can be. No union is putting that amount of investment into their black, brown and Asian activists to try and ensure that we make the difference we need to make. None! This is a first, but it is not the last. (*Applause*)

So those of you who were not successful or who did not get chance to apply, stand by. Stand by because there will be more. Let me just say this because I know that I have gone over my five minutes. I spoke to you about the love that conquers the hate that divides. That hate is insipid. It is subtle. When we think that we are arguing for something and we are fighting each other, sometimes the hate is working its little magic in those moment. So when we need to challenge each other, let's challenge each other with love. Let's challenge each other with love in our hearts, with

respect in our minds and with a hope that whoever we are challenging will understand why it is necessary for us to love.

I'm a Rastaman. There are three words that I live my life by: Peace, love, and unity. *(Applause)* Congress, I give you the GRASP cohort '23/'24. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: What an emotional and powerful way to end this morning's session. It is not quite the end but very nearly. Thank you, Tye, for those words: peace, unity, and love. We all the people on that first GRASP scholarship programme every success and look forward to hearing from them, again, when they have completed their training. As Tye said, they are already starts. Thank you.

### **REGIONAL CAMPAIGN VIDEOS (Scotland, Midlands and Southern)**

THE PRESIDENT: We will now finish the session with our final set of regional campaign videos. I'm joined on the stage by Justin Bowden – Southern Regional Secretary; Martin Allen – Midlands Regional Secretary – and Louise Gilmore – GMB Scotland Secretary. Because they are the three videos that are now going to be shown. Can we roll the videos, please? *(Videos played)*

### **CLOSE OF SESSION**

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, that concludes this morning's business. Enjoy the fringes, and please be back in the hall for a prompt 14:00 start.

*Proceedings concluded for lunch.*

### **AFTERNOON SESSION**

*Congress assembled at 2.00 p.m.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. Thank you. I have two announcements. Please could Asda delegates go to room 1A at 2.30 today. I do not know why but please could you go to room 1A. Thank you. Then anyone who has bought a raffle ticket from the Retired Members Association stall please can you go there because there are still some

prizes left; if you show your ticket you might be one of the people that have won one of those prizes. Can you do that, please? Thank you.

I will just advise some changes to the published schedule. We will first debate Composite 19 and can I ask the speakers of that motion please get yourselves ready at the front. We will then go to debate Rule Amendments and motions relating to Finances and Contributions, the Finance Report and Annual Accounts, and CEC Rule Amendment 12. Then I will explain how that debate is going to go but could I have the mover, please, of Composite 19. It is two Emergency Motions, 1 and 2, submitted on the matter of the water industry, those motions are composited and now form Composite 19 so will London Region please come to move the composite? Thank you.

## **GROSS MISMANAGEMENT OF OUR WATER INDUSTRY, GMB's FIGHT FOR CLEAN WATER**

### **COMPOSITE MOTION 19**

*(Covering Emergency Motions 1 and 2.)*

*1 – Management of our Water Industry.*

*2 – Gross Mismanagement of our Water Industry: GMB Fight for Clean Water.*

### **COMPOSITE 19: GROSS MISMANAGEMENT OF OUR WATER INDUSTRY: GMB FIGHT FOR CLEAN WATER**

This Congress commends the work being undertaken by GMB activists across the UK to end sewage dumping. Congress notes the work of the GMB Commercial Services Section and our reps on the National Water Forum who are campaigning to end sewage dumping in UK waters. Sewage dumping is an issue that impacts our union and our members every day.

This is not just about sewage pollution; our waterways, coastlines and water systems are dying.

We welcome the urgent intervention of Ofwat with the announcement on 20 March 2023 of new powers for the UK's water regulator over the sector to hold water companies to account and clamp down on excessive cash payments.

These powers make it clear that service delivery must come before the distribution of bloated profits to company shareholders.

This congress welcomes these additional powers but makes clear the urgent need to go further and end a system of regulation that has allowed the sector to mark its own homework for too long.

Whilst we welcome higher fines for water companies, these fines should be reinvested into infrastructure projects and improvements to water and waste management.

We need to go further and act quicker.

On 4 April 2023, DEFRA announced their “Plan for Water” which includes new projects and investment to tackle storm overflow discharges, reduce nutrient pollution from treatment works and address water resilience challenges.

We need the Government to look at the wider picture for clean, safe water- source to sea is the way forward.

We are concerned about the “self-regulation” of the industry. It is wrong that water companies monitor their own storm overflows and provide information on how they are performing. Water companies are misleading the government and the public daily. A 31 March 2023 Environment Agency announcement shows that the water companies' claims to be investing to reduce discharges were 'wilfully misleading. Water companies should not be allowed to discharge thousands of times a year with the excuse of heavy rainfall.

This needs to stop.....

We need a massive programme of heavy investment in wastewater and sewerage infrastructure, on unbiased water monitoring and enforcement which will boost regional jobs and local communities and improve the environment.

Whilst we welcome Water UK's press release (18 May 2023) announcing a £10 billion investment we are appalled that on the same day the Chair of Water UK said that customers would be paying for this through increased water bills.

This conference resolves to making better regulation and investment a priority for our national water sector, to end sewage dumping and invest in Britain creaking water network.

GMB are calling for an immediate urgent public inquiry into the investment and governance of the whole of the UK water sector to improve our dated infrastructure as this underinvestment goes back decades, beginning long before privatisation.

GMB also call on the Labour Party to back us and show real action on this scandal. This congress calls on the Labour Party to back GMB in our fight and commit to investing in Britain's out of date water infrastructure.

*(Carried)*

CLIFF RONEY (London): Speaking on Emergency Motion, Gross Mismanagement of our Water Industry, GMB's Fight for Clean Water.

I hope you all enjoyed your lunch because I am going to be speaking about poo, so I do apologise. Congress notes that the work of the GMB Commercial Service Section and our reps in the National Water Forum, I would like to personally thank all the reps and all the people involved in the National Water. We have now achieved 8,000 members up and down the UK and I think that needs a round of applause. *(Applause)* Our reps are working hard in the campaign to end sewage dumping in the UK waters and to put pressure on the water companies to invest more money in the infrastructure. GMB is calling for an immediate urgent public inquiry into the investment and governance of the whole of Water UK to improve the dated infrastructure as this underinvestment goes back over 30 years.

Since 1989, £57bn has been paid out to the fat cat owners in bonuses, payments in shares and dividends. Do you think that is an irony that the Lords recently reported that it would cost approximately £56bn to upgrade our water structure; what do we think of that? Poo! In 1989, Margaret Thatcher stood up in parliament and said that privatisation of the water companies would lead to infrastructure improvements and better customer services: more Tory lies, more poo.

There are 375,000 sewage spills into rivers, canals, and coastal areas and waterways in the UK and Wales in 2022, lasting a total of 2.3 million hours. This is all at a time when the CEOs of the water companies are taking millions of pounds in wages and bonuses: Liv Garfield, of Seven Trent Water, £3.9m. Shame on you. Steve Mogford of United Utilities, £3.2m. Shame on you. (*Applause*) Sarah Bentley of Thames Water, £2m. Shame on you. They will not be visiting food banks like thousands of our members next week, will they?

I personally worked in the water areas where people's homes had been flooded and businesses had been destroyed all because of a lack of infrastructure and investment. I am sure that many of you in this hall have children, grandchildren, maybe great grandchildren, who enjoy playing on a beach and having a paddle but we now find ourselves in a situation where the children are left with a choice of building a sandcastle or a poo castle. We have a responsibility to future generations and nature to make sure that the beaches and waterways are safe for recreation and wildlife.

I get great pleasure in taking my grandson Henry for a day on the beach building a sandcastle! Only last year I found myself looking at a water quality board to see whether it was safe to do so. If we are faced with this going forward it is disgusting. The Tory Government has created privatisation, it should never have happened, the water fat cats are taking amounts of money and also now, to cap it all, Water UK has made an announcement that we are all going to end up paying more for it, more poo, and just in case we will put *that* there! (*Laughter*) Sorry, Malcolm!

THE PRESIDENT: No, it's me in the chair, not Malcolm!

CLIFF RONEY (London): Please get behind this motion and fight for the future of our beautiful beaches, our wonderful coastlines, lakes and rivers. Remember, sandcastles, not poo castles. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cliff. Well done. It was very entertaining so it is okay about going over the red light. That is fine. A seconder from Midlands?

JASON EVANS (Midlands): How do we follow that, brothers and sisters! President, Congress, the awful state of sewage dumping in our rivers and coastlines has been well publicised over recent months. As the union for water workers it is our members who bear the brunt of understandable public anger and also employers' attempts to under-report and to manipulate data. (*Applause*) Under-investment in subdividing the surface water drainage from foul sewers has been evident since the Victorian era. Privatisation certainly has not brought improvements as it promised to, only asset stripping and profiteering. So, whilst executives receive premier league wages, serious foul play occurs daily all across our regions and this must be given the red card, with expectations for customers again to foot the bill for this mismanagement whilst billions are transferred annually by shareholders cannot be accepted. Congress, we have long been campaigning to take back the tap. Clearly now we also need to take back the crap. Please support. (*Applause/Cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jason. Well done. I cannot see anyone in opposition and the CEC is supporting this motion so I can go straight to the vote. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Composite Motion 19 was CARRIED.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: FINANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS, RULE AMENDMENTS AND MOTIONS**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 3, Union Organisation, Finance and Contributions, Rule Amendments and Motions. Please listen carefully to the order in which these items will be debated. We shall first hear the movers and seconders of RAs 306, 309, 311, and the Motions 39 and 40. Can those people moving and seconding those come down now? I will call for anyone who wishes to oppose any of these items. I will then call the General Secretary to respond with the CEC's position on all these items. The General Secretary will then himself move the Financial Statement, the change of auditors, and CEC RA12. We will then vote on the Financial Statement, the CEC RA12, and the change of auditors, and then finally we will go back to take the votes on all the Rule Amendments and motions. Could I have the mover of RA306, please?

## **APPRENTICES AND STUDENTS (NEW RULE)**

### **RA306. RULE NO. 47b CLAUSE: (new)**

RULE NO: 47b    CLAUSE: (new)

TITLE: Apprentices and Students (new Rule)  
(as shown in the 2022 Rule Book)

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

This is a new rule as we understand that Rule 46 allows for promotional rates but we cannot find a reference to Apprentices in the Rule Book yet we have this info on our literature. We note that Apprentices currently pay £3 a month and students pay £1 a month which needs updating.

State Amendment:

Contributions payable by apprentices should be £6 per month, approximately £1.50p per week. Once a member has completed his or her apprenticeship, contributions will be applied at the relevant Grade 1 or 2 rates. Members will be contacted on a regular basis to ensure the appropriate rates are collected.

Students in full-time education will pay £2 per month: students in work will pay the Grade 1 or Grade 2 rates appropriate to their jobs.

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

Contributions payable by apprentices should be £6 per month, approximately £1.50p per week. Once a member has completed his or her apprenticeship, contributions will be applied at the relevant Grade 1 or 2 rates. Members will be contacted on a regular basis to ensure the appropriate rates are collected.

Students in full-time education will pay £2 per month: students in work will pay the Grade 1 or Grade 2 rates appropriate to their jobs.

## **R27 REDBRIDGE BRANCH LONDON**

*(Lost)*

STEPHEN JONES (London): Moving RA306, Rule No. 47b, and it is in a clause new. Everything is self-explanatory in the pack but we feel that these suggested new rates are not unreasonable considering the changed financial situation of branches. Whilst it is laudable to offer preferential rates to students and apprentices, the suggested change is a measured one and still seems a good deal for young people, most of whom have good job prospects and support, a good economic future, and good rights for good employment once their studies are completed and they have completed their training. Please support this motion. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Seconder? Formally? Thank you.

RA306 was formally seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: The mover of RA309?

## **FUNERAL BENEFIT**

### **RA309. RULE NO: 53, CLAUSE: 1**

RULE NO: 53                      CLAUSE: 1

TITLE: FUNERAL BENEFIT

(as shown in the 2022 Rule Book)

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

If a full financial member, who has been a continuous member for 5 years dies, the regional secretary will, having been given a copy of the death certificate, pay the widow, widower, member of the family or nominated person a funeral grant of £400. (This person will need to show that they are responsible for paying funeral expenses.)

State Amendment:

Our reasoning is that due to the rising cost of funerals and the cost of living the current funeral benefit of £400 is inadequate

Remove "£400" from Line 5 and replace with "£450"

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

If a full financial member, who has been a continuous member for 5 years dies, the regional secretary will, having been given a copy of the death certificate, pay the widow, widower, member of the family or nominated person a funeral grant of £450. (This person will need to show that they are responsible for paying funeral expenses.)

## **E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH**

### **LONDON**

*(Lost)*

JAN SMITH (London): Afternoon, President, Congress. I come before you once again pleading for the GMB to look at helping our members at their lowest point, this being when they have lost a loved one. Congress, the CEC is opposing our Rule Amendment due to financial pressure of funding a contributions freeze. I say to you we are only asking for a small increase and this increase is only £50, a very small drop in the ocean. This was last changed two years ago back in 2021 and at that time it was £25.

Colleagues, our members, too, are facing financial pressures and we are sure that there are many members claiming funeral benefit. I know from my own branch the numbers I have to claim for. With the average cost of a basic funeral at the moment standing at around £4,000 plus, we need to look and help our most vulnerable members especially at their time of



need, and our OAPs especially at their time of need. Congress, we have done our homework. Look at what the other unions offer in their funeral benefit.

Whilst the CEC is saying they cannot afford an increase we see that Unite union have a funeral benefit of between £100 and £1,000, depending on membership that £500 is for the most enhanced members with 26 weeks membership to qualify. The CWU have a funeral/death benefit of £941, increased with the RPI each year with no qualifying period, just that member's need to be financial members paying subs at the time of death. Can I say our dreaded Unison has a funeral benefit of £576 with members only needing four weeks membership to qualify.

Colleagues, I am asking you to help us with a small £50 increase and can I say to you our retired members from whatever region if they ring me up and say, "I have just lost my loved one," my husband, my wife, "what do I do," when I tell them how much money they can claim for the funeral benefit the times that they have broken down in tears and said, "You don't know how much that means to me because I have had to do a fundraising thing to be able to pay for my loved one to have a decent send off." Congress, please use your conscience and support this motion. I move.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Secunder?

STEPHEN ROBERTSON (London): Madam President, Congress, I am seconding this and I don't think I even need to say anything, Jan has said it all. It is £50, and it is the last action our union can do for our members, the final action we can do and, let's face it, there are not many of us able to go rushing out to claim it, we do not want to claim it, or settle the claim any time soon, but I am seconding this motion with Jan and if the CEC keep opposing it we will keep coming back until they agree. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. Mover of RA311?

## **FUNERAL BENEFIT**

### **RA311**

RULE NO: 53    CLAUSE: 1

TITLE: FUNERAL BENEFIT

(as shown in the 2022 Rule Book)

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

1. If a full financial member, who has been a continuous member for 5 years dies, the regional secretary will, having been given a copy of the death certificate, pay the widow, widower, member of the family or nominated person a funeral grant of £400. (This person will need to show that they are responsible for paying funeral expenses.)

State Amendment: Line 2 - change 5 years to 2 years

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

1. If a full financial member, who has been a continuous member for 2 years dies, the regional secretary will, having been given a copy of the death certificate, pay the widow, widower, member of the family or nominated person a funeral grant of £400. (This person will need to show that they are responsible for paying funeral expenses.)

**B14 BANBURY NO.1 BRANCH**  
**LONDON**  
*(Lost)*

STEPHEN ROBERTSON (London): This is on funeral benefits, funnily enough. It is about the qualifying period. This rule amendment is simply asking for the qualifying period for funeral benefits to be adjusted from five to two years membership. This simply is an equality issue or a lack of equality within our union, a lack of equality for a young member in London Region who died this year. He only had one year membership so they were told they could not claim it. The lack of equality for a middle-aged member from our Branch, Banbury Branch, who only had four years membership and I had the lovely task of personally telling his family member, who was also a union member, "Sorry, he's not been a member long enough, he does not qualify because of the GMB rules." The question was asked, "He's not good enough because he only had four years? If he had had five years, he would have been good enough to get it?" It is just not right.

Branches often pay hardship grants in these circumstances, at the wishes of the union, but that is not the point. This rule is a total embarrassment to our great union. If those members' families did a bit of research like Jan has into other unions, they would see what they do as a final mark of respect for our young members who pass away before their time. As Jan has already pointed out, Unite 26 weeks, Unison four weeks qualifying, CWU no weeks, Usdaw after 12 months. Our brothers and sisters in the CEC are asking you to oppose this rule amendment. The reason given is this benefit has always been seen as a benefit for long-serving members. Come on, the CEC, I respectfully ask, what is this "always seen"? There is a lot of things that have always been seen suddenly. That does not mean it does not need to change.

A few years ago a long-serving member was always seen as eight years but I think it was thanks to Jan again she got it down to five years. So, why can't you be a member and seen as a member from day one. I am asking everybody in this hall. There will be no campaign for rights from day one, workers' rights from day one, we do not have this point down but you would all be up in arms if some employer turned round and said, "You cannot get benefits until you have been a long-serving worker for five years," you would all be up in arms, wouldn't you? Please, Congress, go against the CEC, who recommends you oppose this rule amendment, and then support what is right, what is just, and what is fair. Sorry, this rule could be seen by some as age discrimination. Thank you. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. Secunder?

MARTIN DOLAN (London): As the previous speaker said, the current level of the qualifying service is five years. We are only asking for it to be reduced to two. As you have heard from my colleague, the GMB are at the bottom of the rankings. If this amendment is adopted, we will still be at the bottom of the league table. As an organisation all of us on a daily basis fight hard to prevent the race to the bottom. Yes, CEC, a wake-up call, we are at the bottom. I am calling on all of you, every delegate in this room, defy the race to the bottom. Defy the CEC. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. The mover of Motion 39?

## **ADDITIONAL BRANCH SUPPORT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS MOTION 39**

### **39. ADDITIONAL BRANCH SUPPORT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS**

This Congress calls upon branches to offer additional support for Local Authority campaigns in the form of promotional rates and financial assistance for campaigns by purchasing materials. Local Authorities should be a target for all branches who hold members and as such there should be a live campaign to increase membership especially in Labour controlled authorities.

#### **B06 GMB ORGANISING BRANCH NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER *(Carried)***

TERRY GAMBLE (NE, Yorkshire & Humber): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, inequality, below inflation pay increases, reduction in contracted hours, attacks on working terms and conditions. These are just a few of the campaign issues our members in local authority have had to endure as a consequence of 13 years of a Tory austerity-driven

agenda. That is even before mentioning the £1m reduction in local authority workforce since 2010. Yet of the almost two million remaining strong workforce, plus all local authorities, about 50% are unionised members which equates to about 200,000 which are GMB members.

With many struggling in this current financial crisis, increased cost of living, and rising inflation, often it is almost vulnerable workers in the most deprived areas that are more susceptible, with less disposable income, those on low or minimum wages, or women on part-time or fixed time contracts, often in care or education such as teaching assistants who equate approximately to one-third of the local authority workers. Campaigners regularly highlight teaching assistants as a target for job cuts. As such, it is probably understandable where their priorities are and why membership numbers vary across different authorities.

It is in these times of difficulty that as one united GMB family we support and stand in solidarity with our local authority members. Being innovative we call on all branches during the live campaign, to recruit new members in local authorities targeting such as schools, care homes, high-density work areas looking for membership. With disillusionment and discontent with years of broken Tory policies and austerity there has never been a better time for Labour controlled authorities to support and encourage union recruitment with success in gaining an additional 22 councils, almost one million potential members. However, GMB branches must also play their part and use their funds in the right context for organising and recruitment. Therefore, Congress, we ask that you support this motion by calling upon branches to offer additional support for campaigns in the form of promotional rates and financial assistance for campaigns such as purchasing materials. Congress, I move.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

DOMINIC HOOK (NE, Yorkshire & Humberside): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. Congress, I am a proud union activist in Newcastle. I work very hard for the GMB members in our local council supporting low paid workers in schools, social services, local services, support staff, and apprentices. Within the department I work for, which is transport, I have managed to increase the membership by the help, support, and care the branch and myself have given to members when they need it most. However, every department needs the same attention. This motion is about ensuring the funding is there to ensure all our members feel part of the GMB family and receive the help and support they deserve. Following on and adding to

what Terry has already said, there is no doubt reps, members, and even potential new members within the local authorities would benefit from funding to help with organising, recruitment, and materials for campaigns.

Newcastle is a Labour-run council and therefore we have a good recognition agreement and good relationship with our management and councillors. However, there is no doubt we need to work together in the branch to ensure we offer the best support for our members and show that we are proactive and not just reactive. Although the recognition agreements are good, we often see resistance from managers when it comes to facility time for reps to carry out campaigns or even new staff in recruit. This motion is about giving the branches the tools we need to build the union and gives us the flexibility to run campaigns that we know will work locally. Congress, please vote to support the local authority reps as we build a bigger and stronger GMB. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dominic. Then the mover of Motion 40, please?

## **COST-OF-LIVING-CRISIS**

### **MOTION 40**

#### **40. COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

This Congress has noted that during the pandemic, as a result of us all working from home, if that was possible, and the resultant sudden downturn in demand for oil and gas, energy companies were briefly paying refineries to take the oil they produced. The pandemic also shut down air shipments of freight in the belly hold of passenger aircraft destroying the ability to provide a next day delivery service of some goods. As a result, the shipping lines were able to massively increase the cost of shipping anything by sea or by rail from the Far-East to Europe.

Additionally, following Brexit, the cost of importing and exporting any of the products required or produced also increased as we were no longer able to avoid tariffs and the additional cost of the bureaucracy.

On top of that we have had the increases in the cost of energy that has impacted individuals and businesses across Europe as a result of Russian aggression and eventual illegal invasion of Ukraine, expanding their illegal occupation of the Crimean Peninsula.

The result of all this has been in December 2022, a 16.9% increase in food and non-alcoholic beverages, a 11.7% increase in the cost of housing and household services, a 11.4% increase in the cost of hotels and restaurants causing RPI to 13.4% from a high of 14.2% in October.

During that time the Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) only rose by 6.5% in the 12 months to November 2022. This means that the average worker in the last 12 months has suffered a real term 7.7% cut in their wages.

Over the nearly 13 years since Tory government came to power, the cost-of-living RPI measure of inflation has witnessed a 60.2% increase in prices yet the Average Weekly Wage has not kept pace rising by 40.5% (a 19.7% cut in the standard of living). In the public sector the average wage increased by 37.7% and manufacturing wages only rose by 32.4%. Even in the Finance and Business services industries, wages increased by an average of 48.1%.

This government has made discovery of company profits harder by relaxing the reporting obligations of big business and made it easier for businesses to avoid paying tax to provide the coffers to pay people

in the NHS, fire services, police, local authorities and other government departments a decent wage, while some top bankers can again receive an unlimited bonus for making the bank yet more money. This deregulation of banker's bonuses was what led to the global financial collapse in 2008/9; hasn't the government learnt from past mistakes?

Is it any wonder that we now have more people in food poverty than before they came to power. This government has systematically made it harder to protest and be part of a trade union and now the government even attacks the human right to strike so that its backers can reap the rewards of this latest crisis.

Privatisation caused the rail industry to build up a £40 billion debt mountain and privatisation of the water industry has allowed the private owners to sell land and assets, reduce overheads and yet build up a £50 billion+ debt mountain, between them they have paid most of this money to private shareholders in dividends instead of reinvestment. It has also given the ownership of our energy and utilities to foreign investment.

We call on Congress to:

- Fight for the end to this government and the end to efforts to subjugate the workers through a regime of fear so that their friends can buy yet another yacht from their dividends while workers queue at food banks.
- Fight to renationalise our critical public services so that it can rebuild and reinvest, allowing the UK to be energy self-sufficient and not impacted by global politics in the future.
- Enhance the hardship fund to help those in need should they lose their employment through no fault of their own.
- Call on the Central Executive Council for the creation of a strike pay so that no worker fears the loss of wages.
- Assist low paid members by freezing all subscription increases.

**M23 GMB UNITE BRANCH**  
**LONDON**  
*(Carried)*

WAYNE OSWICK (London): Brothers, sisters, comrades, this motion should be called the Tories Caused the Living Crisis. When will this spineless Tory Party ever admit that it is not the striking workers, Ukraine, or the small boat migrants that have caused this problem. We all here in this Congress room today, and others outside, have lived through this hell, all the way through hard winter months of discontent and austerity because of 13 years of Tory mismanagement and self-inflicted economy disasters where billions have been lost through Brexit trade and bureaucratic red tape.

The crash of the pound value against the dollar by a PM who could not compete with the life span of a lettuce, the lowest GDP in the G7, and let's not forget Sunak abolishing the cap for bankers allowing free rein to increase interest rates on the head of inflation busting and stopping the problem, this is not decreasing inflation, it is causing a devastation with families losing their homes and the high streets are closing, the highest rates for 13 years.

As we know, this Government are doing nothing to help us. We need to continue to encourage members to take part in campaigns and initiatives

that will deliver real change. Politically, industrially, socially, we can do this, we can make things in our union better. This motion lists actions that can be taken to achieve this. We appreciate this motion is with qualification but due to the crisis we are living through and the long-term effects with no end in sight, we ask Congress to support this motion in asking branches to help their members with a hardship fund. If there ever was a time to ensure every action to support our members now is that time. It is our duty as a member of the union to ensure that members' subscriptions are used responsibly to support them at work and to help them ease the cost of living. If not, who else will? Congress, I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. A seconder, then, for Motion 40?

RAJA NAVEED AHMED (London, Professional Drivers Branch): First time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am seconding Motion 40. This motion perfectly set the scene as to how we got to where we are. Through years of Tory mismanagement we are seeing the true fruits of austerity, more people in poverty, increased fuel and energy prices, food inflation after 45 years high, more people using food banks, and the list goes on. Although inflation is on its way down, wages have failed to keep pace with inflation and that is why more and more workers are protesting while they still can. GMB has been standing up and saying enough is enough as this high inflation is eroding the real value of the money we have in our pockets. Our motion is asking that branches help their members to make work better by organising and campaigning. We also need to reach out and support those in hardship as there is no end in sight of this cost-of-living-crisis. If there was ever a time to ensure that we are using every tool, every action, every penny to support our members now is that time. It is our duty as a member of the union to ensure that our members' subscriptions are used responsibly to support them at work and help the weak to ease the cost-of-living-crisis because if not us, if not our members, who will? I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Raja. Anybody wishing to speak against? Can you make it clear which one you are opposing, please? Thank you.

ANNETTE DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): Rising to oppose RA311. The reason why I am opposing this is to say to Congress, I am a regional committee member, I have been a regional committee member for 10 years and not once have we refused a funeral benefit, whether it be late or whether it does not meet the criteria. GMB Scotland has never, ever, refused anybody the funeral benefit regardless of their circumstances. Last month we had

someone who had unfortunately died, a 42-year old who had only six months service with GMB but was leaving eight kids. All I want to say to you is if you were in that circumstance or you know a member that is in that circumstance, take it back to your regional committees, there is no need for a rule change. Thank you. (*Applause*)

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Speaking against Rule Amendments 309 and 311. There was a queue of people there, only a small queue of people trying to speak against these motions. Look, comrades, the people that are moving these motions and London Region supporting them are doing it because they are good people, absolutely, because it breaks our heart to see our members in financial difficulty or any other difficulties and we want to help them, but how we best help our members is by fighting for improved conditions and better pay at work for our core business of organising and fighting, and watch those regional videos, right across the regions of England and the nations of the UK GMB is fighting, we are fighting bad bosses and we are winning, and that costs money. It costs millions of pounds in strike pay, in comms, in materials that we are producing, in travel expenses, it costs a lot of money and we cannot spend the same money twice.

The other thing is that our members are struggling with their bills, and they are finding the GMB subscriptions hard. Now, Gary was elected with an absolutely iron mandate to keep the cost of membership down and we need to respect that. So, your branches and regions have discretionary powers to spend that can be used to help people in hardship, but we need to focus on what we do best, fighting, organising, and winning, for working people. Midlands have a fantastic banner at the back with a picture of Will Thorne, the founder of our union, and on the first article of association of our union it said we pay only one benefit, strike benefit. We are absolutely focused on fighting bosses. People have said we are at the bottom of the league table. We might be at the bottom of the league table for funeral benefit but I tell you, comrades, we are top of the league table for organising workers, winning more money for them, and fighting bad bosses. Please oppose these rule amendments. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Stephen, you were the mover of RA311, so you have the right of reply. Sorry, there is another speaker.

SUZANNE WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): Opposing RA311. I am a regional committee member and we have never, ever, refused a funeral benefit. In



fact, last week we gave an additional £1,000 to a member in difficulty. We oppose. (*Applause*)

STEPHEN ROBERTSON (London): Replying to the call to oppose this. GMB Scotland always pay funeral benefits, our branch certainly does the same but it is a hardship grant. You have to tell them, "You are not getting the funeral benefits because you are not qualifying for it, that's the rule, but the branch will give you a hardship benefit," and we pay out. So, if everybody is paying it, then what is the point in the rule? Why have the rule in there? Why not just scrap the rule all together? I am not asking for it to be scrapped. I am asking for it to be put in to two years. Where is the harm if you pay it all the time? (*Applause*) Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. Jan, you moved RA309, which was also opposed, so you have the right of reply as well.

JAN SMITH (London): Colleagues, my right of reply to RA309: yes, there are hardships, yes, we fight for the working class, we will always fight for the working class, but we also have to remember our colleagues who are on the breadline. We have heard about the food banks, we know about the food banks. Only a few weeks ago I presented £1,000 cheque on behalf of my region to the Trussell Food Bank and a marvellous job they are doing, but we also have to remember our people who have lost loved ones, they do not have the money or have to go into fundraising to give them the send-off. All I am asking for is for £50 and £50, Gary, I know you are looking toward the freezing of our contributions, I fully accept that, but we cannot keep going year after year and not increase this funeral benefit. From when I first started in this union and my very first Congress, back in the '70s, it was £125. How far have we come since that time, peanuts. Please, Congress, use your Congress and vote for this motion. I support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. I now call on the General Secretary to respond on behalf of the CEC.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, President, Congress. Gary Smith responding on behalf of the CEC with positions on RA306, 309, 311, and Motions 39 and 40.

Coming first to RA306, the CEC's position is to ask the region to withdraw. In 2013, the CEC's Finance Report, which was adopted, introduced the promotional rate under Rule 46 of £2 per month for apprentices, which in

turn increased in 2019 to £3, and £1 a month for students. The CEC feels that these current amounts still represent the correct contribution level. Remember, Rule 46.2 gives regional committees the final say over which members are appropriate to pay a promotional rate.

Next turning to RA309, the CEC is asking that you oppose this amendment. I do understand all the emotion behind the sentiment in this proposed rule amendment. I honestly do get it, Jan, but we have increased this benefit before and we ensured that people who were on grade two membership got the benefit of the full funeral benefit as well. When we talk about what other unions are doing we have to compare apples with apples. This is a benefit we pay to people who are not in financial membership, people who are retired life members, and what you are being asked to do is not pay an extra £50 pay out for a funeral, though you are being asked that, you are being asked to put a cost of over £40,000 a year on the union. This is controversial but you have to hear that because I have always said I will be honest with you. In terms of retired life members alone, the potential liability of putting up the funeral benefit is about £4m. We will deal with on another day what we have been doing with retired life members outside the rule. There are costs associated with this and it is difficult, and it is highly emotional but I just want to be straight with you on that.

In terms of RA311, the CEC is asking that you oppose this motion. Regions do have discretion over this benefit or supporting members who are in hardship. I have to tell you, Congress, it just does not seem right to me that people who have two years service can be paying less money to the union than they could get out on funeral benefit. That does not seem fair to everybody else in the union, particularly when we have a discretionary element where we can support people who are in real need.

A comrade who got up and spoke in opposition made a point, and this is very, very important. It is easy to use language like we are bottom of the table, but we have to look at the full range of things we do as a union. We spent £2.7m on strike pay and hardship payments supporting our members last year and a load of other unions that were mentioned did not spend anything like that supporting their members in struggle. (*Applause*) This union will never be bottom of the table when it comes to supporting our members in struggle. Congress, I was elected on a mandate to make the union more affordable. Again, I have to be straight with you, I cannot do everything. I cannot be increasing benefits and cutting subs and putting money into the campaigns and fights that we want to take on, I struggle to square that circle and I need your help.

Finally, on Motion 39 and Motion 40, the CEC is supporting both with a qualification. Rule 35.1A on branches, states the purpose of each branch is to help us achieve the aims set out in these rules giving priority to recruiting, organising, providing services for, and keeping members, and the basic unit of the branch will encourage members to take part in its democracy. The CEC encourages branches to use the funds held by them to promote membership of the union through running campaigns, ensuring relevant materials are purchased for the same. However, our qualification is that the setting of contribution rates remains a matter for Congress and the union and is governed by Rules 45 to 47. Branches cannot, therefore, set any promotional rates under Rule. We are looking hard to keep the GMB affordable, subs freezes, and we are looking at alternative charging models as well.

Therefore, in conclusion, Congress, we are asking that RA306 is withdrawn, Congress oppose RA309 and 311, and Motions 39 and 40 to be supported with their qualifications. Thank you. *(Applause)*

## **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. The General Secretary will now move the Financial Statement which includes the change of auditors and CEC RA12.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, President, Vice President, thank you. Moving the Financial Statement to year end 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, CEC RA12, and the position on the auditors. We have had no questions, Congress, so therefore I move adoption. I do want to use this opportunity, President, rightly to say thank you to Graham, to Alison and Gary (who are in the hall) from the finance team, and indeed the rest of the team who operate the Administration Unit in Paisley, you do a fantastic, often unseen, job tirelessly working away to make sure the union's finances are managed properly. Thank you on behalf of us all. *(Applause)*

I have the very sad news to give you, certainly for me and for us, that Graham will retire next year, this will be his last Congress in his current role. Graham, I have to say that you have brought a degree of transparency in the accounting and budgeting, I think you have given our Finance & General Purposes Committee and the CEC a newfound confidence on how we manage our finances and having dealt with you close up I always support the advice you give me, Congress, Graham behaves at all times with such great integrity, you do not allow politics to get in the way of how

we manage the union's money, we thank you so much for all your service and for the fantastic job you have done on our behalf. I know we will welcome you back next year but thank you formally, Graham, on behalf of Congress. (*Applause*)

We have spoken a lot about the growth in financial membership and I am really delighted about that, but you would expect me to temper that a wee bit because now we are talking about the money. We started last year slow, that is the truth of the matter. The membership was slack and performance started slow, we had a lot going on restructuring the regions, etc. etc. but it did pick up pace and you have seen the figures in the latter part of the year, absolutely incredible. We were averaging 8,235 new members joining us per month and we in some of these months since we last met we have seen the biggest growth ever in our financial membership, not just recruiting people but actually building a sustainable union again. I mean this from the bottom of my heart, I am not interested in selling people insurance. I do not want us just to be recruiting people into the union. The union has to be building something and making a difference for working class people at their place of work. The money in the union is important. Don't let anybody kid you on about the management of our finances, our money ain't free, and a union with sound finances is a union that can afford to fight and that is the game that we are back in, folks.

What we are also not doing is ever going to allow other unions to weaponise strike pay against us. Many of you have seen the way that other unions have behaved, "Join us today and here is a load of money for going on strike." Our members are not going to be starved back to work and we are not going to be undermined by unions using that type of cynical recruitment practices. That does mean that in backing our members in struggle, in supporting our members in the fight that they are taking on, we have spent a record £2.7m on strike and hardship payments. We spent £1m on a single strike alone. Do you know what, that is what being in the union is about, it is about us coming together and supporting each other at the time it is needed, and I am proud of the fact that is what we have been doing.

For the first time setting the budgets, which we set at the end of last year coming out this year, we have put aside for the first time ever a proper war chest, we have budgeted for it, and I will use this chance to say to branches there is £9.7m in branches and you have the opportunity to support the battle by contributing to your regional strike funds as well. When we go into

battle, when we pick those fights, we will never, ever, be found wanting financially.

Now, legal support is part of what we have to do for our members. We have talked a lot about equal pay and I want our pay to be an industrial battle and sorted on picket lines as Shona and the team did in Glasgow, but you have to have sound legal back-up when you take these fights on, the members are entitled to know that they have the best, and it cost us £2.8m in legal fees last year.

Our investment funds, just in terms of a couple of headlines, they did drop last year as you might expect with the state of the markets, it went down by 20%. We did invest in diversified funds to an extent, and we have £42.4m of our money in those funds, which is actually up £10m on the original value.

On pensions, the story is a positive one, we have closed the deficit in the pension scheme, and I say this on behalf of all of the staff at the union, you backed us on pensions and we are so grateful for the support that you gave us. Our teams, our staff, worked so hard and we begrudge them absolutely nothing, but when the chips were down, and the pension scheme was in deficit you backed us and thank you for that.

We now have a good surplus and that allowed us to make sure that we are reducing the contributions to the pension scheme by £3m a year. Part of that money is going back to you through fees and the subs.

Formally, I need to tell you about the auditors. At the 11<sup>th</sup> June CEC meeting we decided that we should undertake a tender exercise with regard to the provision of external audit services. That includes membership assurance. In total five audit firms submitted proposals and after considering their submissions and hearing presentations from those shortlisted, it was decided to recommend to you from the CEC that a change of auditors be made. That is a longwinded way of saying can you remember how upset Graham was last year coming to Congress over the audit. It was the right thing to do to go to tender and to look at other options, saving us money as well if this goes through. We are recommending that Crowe be appointed as auditors for the audits from 2023 onwards, and it is the intention of the CEC that this be reviewed in five years' time.

Congress, we are in a decent place financially as an organisation. I really appreciate all the work undertaken by the whole SMT, there is a spirit of solidarity and collegiate working that I have never seen in my years on the SMT. In the past we did not properly pay our legal bills. That is where we

got in trouble. We do now. In the past we were transferring money to the political fund and the general fund to balance the books; we did not do that last year. The key to a budget is actually quite simple, you grow the membership, and we grew the membership on the back of fighting and campaigning in the way that we have been doing. When we do not grow the membership what we have to do is come to you every year, as we did, and ratchet up your subs to disguise the fact that the financial membership was falling year in, year out, but because we are growing, because we are being successful, and because I gave you a promise when I stood, we are freezing the union subs for our members again, we need to make this union as affordable as possible. (*Applause*)

I will finish on this, we are in decent shape but we need discipline. We have nearly 600 staff that deserve a pay rise this year as well. We want to invest in projects like GRASP, there is so much work in that area because it is such a symbol of what a better organisation we are and, of course, we always want to continue to support our members in struggle, I want more fires lit, I want more disputes, and let's never be afraid to support our members when they take to a picket line. Sound financial discipline is very important, it is really important, in order that this union can keep fighting and keep campaigning. Congress, President, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Before I take the vote, can I ask movers and seconders of Composites 3, 4, and 5, to make sure they are ready to come down to the front, please. First of all, I will take the vote on the Financial Statement. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is adopted.

*The Financial Statement was ADOPTED.*

THE PRESIDENT: I will then take the vote on CEC RA12, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? No? There is confusion at the moment. What is the confusion? Gary will just remind you of the Rule Amendment.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: The CEC RA12, I hope, is the uncontroversial one, which is about increasing the strike pay.

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour please show? That is better. All those against? That is carried.

*CEC RA12 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Then, lastly, the change of auditors that Gary talked about, all those in favour please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

*Change of Auditors was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Congress, we will now go back to the vote on the Rule Amendments and the motions that were moved before the Financial Statement and I will try and explain this as clearly as I can so we will take them one by one, and I will explain or restate the CEC position on all of these items. London, do you agree to withdraw RA306? No? Okay. The CEC will then be opposing RA306. If you agree with the CEC in opposing the rule amendment, you vote against the rule amendment. If you are in favour of the rule amendment, obviously you vote when I ask "all those in favour". All those in favour of RA306, could you make your hands really clear, please? All those in favour? All those against rule amendments? That has been lost.

*RA306 was LOST.*

THE PRESIDENT: London, do you wish to withdraw RA309? No? Okay, the same applies. The CEC is opposing RA309. That means if you agree with the CEC opposition you vote against the rule amendment. If you are in favour, obviously you vote in favour of the rule amendment. All those in favour of the rule amendment please show? All those against? That is also lost.

*RA309 was LOST.*

THE PRESIDENT: RA311, London do you wish to withdraw? There is a pattern here. The CEC stance is to oppose RA311. Again, if you agree with the CEC stance you vote against the Rule Amendment. If you are in favour, you vote in favour of the Rule Amendment. All those in favour of the Rule Amendment? Thank you. All those against? That is also lost.

*RA311 was LOST.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We move on to Motion 39, does NE, Yorkshire & Humber accept the qualification on Motion 39? Thank you. All those in favour of the motion please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 39 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Does London accept the qualification on Motion 40?  
(*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour of the motion please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 40 was CARRIED.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: BENEFITS AND SERVICE**

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to section 5, Union Organisation: Benefits and Service. Can I ask the mover of Composite Motion 3, please?

### **TO SEEK A 24-HOUR LEGAL SUPPORT HELPLINE FOR MEMBERS COMPOSITE MOTION 3**

*(covering Motions 44 and 45)*

44 – To seek a 24-hour Legal Support Helpline for Members – Midlands Region

45 – 24-Hour Legal Support – Wales & South West Region

### **COMPOSITE 3 TO SEEK A 24-HOUR LEGAL SUPPORT HELP LINE FOR MEMBERS**

This congress acknowledges that many Police Staff members work shift patterns that cover 24 hours over 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, not just Monday to Friday 9 to 5.

This Congress acknowledges that Unionline hasn't been able to service all of the needs of our members, in particular Police Staff who may become involved as a witness or interested party in a post incident procedure (PIP).

Police Staff members, particularly those working in operational policing roles such as PCSOs, Custody Detention Officers and Control Room staff, can find themselves subject to formal investigation as a Key Police Witness by their Professional Standards department or the Independent Office of Police Conduct at any point during their working day whenever a Post Incident Procedure (PIP) is arranged.

A PIP can happen if a police member of staff is involved or is a witness in a death or serious injury to another person. This can involve any of our members across police forces from Detention Officers to Control Room staff. It is a very frightening experience and there is the potential that things can lead to a criminal matter and a conviction.

A PIP is arranged whenever there is a death or serious injury following police contact. If this happens during the normal working day their local GMB rep will do all that they can to provide them support including when necessary, organising legal advice. But, if this is outside of normal GMB working hours the member may be faced with going into an investigation interview or giving a statement with little or no support, currently within the GMB there is no provision to provide this support outside the normal working day. This is not right!



How many of our members can go to work at the beginning of their shift and potentially lose their jobs or have a criminal conviction from something which has happened that day!

Unison are very organised and give all their members a card with a 24 hour dedicated legal help line which they can carry around with them all the time, our members and our Reps and Branch Secretaries have nothing! Having a 24-hour legal provision will also allow us to grow our GMB membership within the Police Service, because we will be able to use this service as another reason why they should join our great union a lack of this service is currently used against us by other unions as part of their recruitment process.

Over Christmas 2022 I received a phone call on bank holiday Tuesday from a control room Chief Inspector in charge of a post incident management (PIM) stating that one of our members had been part of a process where a missing person was found dead. It was bank holiday Tuesday, Regional Office was shut, Unison were closed. I reassured the member and decided to get legal help for a PIP which was due on the Friday where the member would have to give a stage four statement with a solicitor. I managed to phone Unison on the Wednesday but they wanted the member to contact them, 'why I asked they are very upset, and usually Regional Office arrange all this so there is no need to speak to the member'. I was told 'it's GDPR'. Yet again this is Unison not understanding what is needed for a PIP.

I'm afraid I took matters into my own hands because I couldn't leave the member with no legal representation two days later, I emailed everyone including Gary Ruben at Blackfords and he saved the day, I just had to make sure he got the code from Unison so he would be paid.

If this had happened in the middle of the night there would have been no legal support.

Unison use the fact that they have a 24 hour legal help line as a recruitment tool and there are many occasions where I've been to an induction for new starters knowing full well that they join Unison because of this, I can't offer them that support and reassurance.

I ask Congress to look at this matter of urgency mainly to protect our members but this would also be a fantastic recruitment tool. I'm sure other members in this Congress across our workforces would also benefit from this.

This congress calls on the GMB to setup a 24-hour legal support for these members which will provide them with the service they need and deserve.

*(Referred)*

YVONNE DAVIDSON (Midlands): Police staff go to work to help and support the public. We never think that we could be involved or be witness to a death or serious injury which could lead to a post-incident procedure. This is called a PIP. When a PIP is called there is a lockdown of the area and any people involved. Staff and officers in our force are transferred to a post-incident management, which is called a PIM suite, and are not allowed to talk to each other. Their statements are taken. This can involve any of our members across all of our police forces from detention officers to control room staff. It is a very frightening experience and there is potential that things can lead to a criminal matter and a conviction. How many of our members go to work at the beginning of their shift and potentially lose their

job or have a criminal conviction from something which has happened that day at work.

I have been called out to many PIMs at all hours of the day and night. There was one that happened Christmas 2022. I received a phone call on the bank holiday Tuesday from a control room chief inspector in charge of post-incident management (a PIM) stating that one of our control room members, one of our members with the police staff and police officers that had been involved in a 999 call where a missing person was found dead. It was a bank holiday Tuesday, my family were visiting for Christmas, the regional office was obviously shut, UnionLine was closed. I reassured the member that I knew that I needed to get them legal representation for a stage 4 statement three days later.

I phoned UnionLine on the Wednesday but they wanted the member to contact them. "Why," I asked, "they are very upset and usually regional office will arrange all this, and they do not need to speak to the member." I was told it was GDPR. Yet again this is UnionLine not understanding what is needed for a PIP. I could not leave the member with no legal representation on the Friday so I emailed everybody, absolutely everybody, including Gary Rubin at Blackford, and he actually saved the day and contacted the member. If this had happened in the middle of the night there would have been no legal support.

Unison are very good, very organised, and give all their members a card with a 24-hour dedicated legal outline, which they can carry around with them at all time. Unison uses it as a recruitment tool, and it is as very good one as well. I have been to many starter inductions knowing full well that they will join Unison because of this. I cannot offer them that support and reassurance. Our members, our reps, and our branch secretaries have nothing.

I ask Congress to look at this as a matter of urgency, mainly to protect our members but this would also be a fantastic recruitment tool. I am sure other members in this Congress across our workforces would also benefit from this. Please support Composite 3. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Yvonne. Thank you. A seconder from Wales & South West?

KATE HOOD (Wales & South West): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. Many police staff members work 24 hours a day,

seven days a week, 365 days a year, so can find themselves under investigation at any time of the day or night. If this happens during the GMB working day their local rep can access support via their regional organiser, including accessing legal advice when necessary. Outside of these hours the members and their rep may be faced with going into an investigation interview or giving a statement without the necessary support and guidance.

Members pay their subs and therefore expect a level of support that gives them peace of mind with the pressure they work under 24/7. As it stands this is not available to them outside of normal office hours and puts them at a disadvantage compared to their police officer colleagues, and colleagues in other unions who have 24/7 legal cover. This is used against us by other unions in recruitment and by providing this it will allow us to grow our GMB membership as well as giving our members the service and support they need and deserve. Please, Congress, support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Kate. The mover of Composite 4?

**GMB LEGAL SERVICES THROUGH UNIONLINE AND IN NORTHERN IRELAND  
COMPOSITE MOTION 4**

*(Covering Motions 46, 47, and 48)*

46 – GMB Legal Services – London Region

47 – Make UnionLine Great Again – Southern Region

48 – UnionLine Northern Ireland – North West & Irish Region

**COMPOSITE 4 GMB LEGAL SERVICES THROUGH UNIONLINE AND IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

This Congress agrees to fully relaunch our legal services through Unionline. Congress believes that Unionline is a great idea, a firm of solicitors owned by GMB and CWU, where the benefits flow back to union members.

Congress notes however, that the experience has sometimes been disappointing. In particular, it is challenging to deal with Unionline for many GMB members who perhaps don't speak English as their first language, or who struggle to explain themselves to solicitors.

This Congress urges that action is taken to address the level of concern and dismay felt by the Northern Ireland membership regarding the standard of service and unacceptable level of inaccurate information being provided to them by Unionline. We feel that despite assurances that the matter would be addressed, the service being provided to Northern Ireland is not fit for purpose, is disrespectful and potentially damaging to recruitment and retention in our area.

Between GMB and CWU (including members families) we should realistically have access to over one million people, most of which will be employed in a workplace.

Congress believes that for some members it would be appropriate for their branch secretary or Regional Organiser to support them in presenting their case to Unionline, rather than expect the member to deal direct with the solicitors from the start.

A significant number of GMB members would be employed in workplaces using chemicals, such as in the textile, rubber, leather, dye, paint, and print industries; some naturally occurring chemicals; and chemicals called aromatic amines and others which can also increase the risk of bladder cancer.

As with other campaigns, GMB should consider a thorough national and regional strategy to identify members and their families who may be adversely affected by their occupation, so we are adequately providing pro-active legal support for any personal injury or industrial disease which may be inflicted on our members through no fault of their own.

Congress notes that branch secretaries, and other shop stewards, often have a need to clarify a point of law, and that Unionline doesn't easily support this.

Congress resolves that Unionline should provide a dedicated service for GMB branch secretaries to gain advice, where appropriate.

Congress further resolves that Unionline should support a process, where employment cases on behalf of members, can also be raised with Unionline, in the first instance, by GMB branch secretaries or Regional Officials.

In addition, we call on Congress to agree that Northern Ireland members will be referred directly to a local service provider, who is familiar with the differences and intricacies of Northern Ireland Legislation, without having to liaise, in the first instance with an advisor that has demonstrated repeatedly its deficiencies in this area of law.

*(Referred)*

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Comrades, what a brilliant idea UnionLine is. It is often not acknowledged that some of the trade union solicitor firms, as they describe themselves, are paid million pound bonuses and they have directors that are sitting on yachts in the Mediterranean. It is a brilliant idea to have a union firm belonging to working people, the GMB and CWU, it is an idea that Paul Kenny when he was General Secretary brought in, and it is really great to see Paul in the room, and I believe I was the person that moved the rule amendment that put UnionLine into the rulebook, so I certainly agree with the idea but, comrades, it does not always live up to its promise and that is the point of the composite, that we can do better.

In particular, there is a problem for members who need to phone UnionLine to lodge a legal claim with them but perhaps they do not speak English as their first language, perhaps they are in the middle of a crisis, I had a member whose husband had dropped dead at work, the workplace that she actually worked in, now this was resolved and I was able to represent her to UnionLine but that took some effort in going behind the scenes and struggling to do it. That was not something that was straightforward. We have people who do not speak English as their first language but also as

trade union reps what we are so good at, what you are so good at, is patiently listening to people for maybe half an hour, an hour, or as long as it takes, to find out what their story is and so many working people struggle to explain exactly what the issue is. They do not know which facts are most relevant, they do not know what the law is, and they tell you everything and we are the ones that have to ask the probing questions. To be honest, comrades, we are brilliant at it and with all due respect to any solicitors in the room, solicitors are very poor at it. They do not spend a lot of time with people patiently building up and understanding, so what the composite is calling for is that UnionLine facilitates a way of officers, branch secretaries, helping to lodge the claims.

There is another aspect where it is really important that we as branch secretaries can access legal advice. When we are fighting an employer we fight them with everything, we overwhelm them with industrial action, we are using our political clout, with press warfare, with press releases going out, and also with bogging them down in every legal action that we can so they are petrified of getting a foot wrong because they know that the GMB will be over them like paint. Sometimes as lay members we need to think, "Well, I need to do a press release, I think the employer is wrong, actually the LIB booklets are of course brilliant and if you do not read them you should read them, but sometimes you just really need to talk to a solicitor and say, "Just float this idea, is that unlawful?" That is not a facility which Unionline currently offers.

Now, we are delighted that we have a new legal director and I know that the points we are making in the composite are being listened to, and there are some challenges in implementing everything; first of all, I understand it is very important that the GMB does not itself assume legal liability so that is an issue. Also, there are staffing constraints with Unionline, we respect all of those things, so the CEC has asked for this to be withdrawn, this motion. I do not know how this works with a composite. I just asked my regional secretary and he was not sure either. From the point of view of Southern Region, we are happy for it to be withdrawn. Is it not being withdrawn? We just have the wrong end of the stick, then, in which case go for it. The CEC is supporting it.

THE PRESIDENT: You are being asked to refer it.

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Yes, we are being asked to refer it, not withdraw it. Okay. We are being asked to refer it. From the point of view of Southern Region, we are very happy to refer it. The other regions who were

supporting this composite of course have their own sovereign decision and will make their own decision. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Secorder from London Region?

GAVIN DOWNEY (London): Congress, from 2014 the GMB took the radical step of setting up its own legal firm, a brave, innovative step, providing legal services for its members. In recent years, those who were responsible for managing our law firm from GMB were clearly asleep at the wheel. I make no apology for the frustration you may hear in my voice but it simply was not good enough and so we demanded a better service for our members. Through being provided with the updates we see at our regional council meetings it is clear that significant work has been undertaken to get to the bottom of what has been wrong with our law firm and why the business model initially set up has changed so dramatically during the years between 2016 and 2020. However, we are pleased that supportive and corrective action is now being taken to address the performance and service concerns so many members have had to endure.

When I started as a GMB representative our legal services were enshrined in everything we did, including through our regional training courses. This was a very effective approach and educated all new workplace reps to go back into their workplace and tackle employers over accidents at work whilst at the same time ensuring our members lodged claims for slips, trips, falls, exposure to chemicals, fumes, dust, and in my workplace things like needle pricks from handling refuse. Congress, we have over one million people we can engage as a captive audience and when you include members' families it is a crying shame when you continue to hear members using high street solicitors rather than our own law firm, and then getting fleeced by them when any compensation is awarded.

We are asking Congress to agree to a concerted collective effort targeting various industries where accidents at work are sadly still a daily occurrence with the massive cuts to HSE funding and health and safety being less of a concern to many unscrupulous employers. How else are we going to secure justice for our members and improve health and safety standards in the workplace. Every year we remember those who sadly lost their lives through poor health and safety at work and we respectfully mark Workers Memorial Day. Over recent years I have seen many GMB press releases calling out unsafe working practices and how some employers are bad at work, Amazon being up there amongst the top ten, if not top of the pile.

THE PRESIDENT: Gavin, can you ....

GAVIN DOWNEY (London): I would urge Congress to support our motion and let's start tackling unsafe and unfair working practices. Congress, please support this composite. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. North West and Irish, do you want to ....

MICHAEL BRADY (North West & Irish): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) In relation to UnionLine services in Northern Ireland the problem arises when members are given advice based on employment law as it applies in Gt. Britain. However, employment legislation in Northern Ireland is different in many regards. We have been making UnionLine aware of this issue for a number of years and the outcome is members getting misleading advice. The situation has to change immediately on what members in Northern Ireland need, and to have a better service. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Can I have the mover of Composite 5?

**EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL CASES LINKED TO RACE DISCRIMINATION AND ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS FOR GMB UNION'S SUPPORT OF BLACK MEMBERS IN RACE DISCRIMINATION CASES**

**COMPOSITE MOTION 5**

*(covering Motions 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55)*

51 – Race and Employment Tribunal Cases – London Region

52 – Ensuring Equal Access for GMB Union's Support of Black Members in Race Discrimination Cases – Southern Region

53 – ET Cases Linked to Race Discrimination – NE, Yorkshire & Humber Region

54 – Employment Tribunal Cases Linked to Race Discrimination – Southern Region

55 – ET Cases Linked to Race Discrimination – North West & Irish Region

**COMPOSITE 5: EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL CASES LINKED TO RACE DISCRIMINATION AND ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS FOR GMB UNION'S SUPPORT OF BLACK MEMBERS IN RACE DISCRIMINATION CASES**

This Congress notes that the current process of how an Employment Tribunal case is assessed by the GMB, via Unionline. The prospects of success are determined and if the assessor believes the case has 51% or more chances of success the case is supported by the Union.

Anecdotally, we are seeing race discrimination cases being turned down by UnionLine.

The GMB National Race Network is seeking assurances that the cases are not being subjected to a higher bar of determining success than say for example, other discriminatory cases not involving race.

Black Asian, Minority, Ethnic members of the GMB must feel confident that goods and services in their Union are accessible and currently there is a perception amongst some black members that this is not the case.

Congress instructs:

- That a sampling exercise should take place of race discrimination cases that have not been supported with the involvement of the National Race Network in conjunction with the National Race Officer.
- That we consider looking at Race cases over the last 5 years.
- The GMB Union to present a report to the GMB Congress 2024 with findings and recommendations

*(Referred)*

HORTENSE SILVERA (Southern): Good afternoon, President, and our GMB Congress. This motion is quite personal to me as it has been my lived experience with my son Troy when I was pregnant. Troy, this is for you. Today I stand before you to address a major issue of radical discrimination with an urgent plea for justice and equality. We cannot turn a blind eye to the concerns that have reached our ears, the whispers of racial discrimination cases being turned down by our UnionLine. We must confront this issue head-on for the sake of our black and ethnic minority members and the integrity of our union.

Congress, we are the champions of justice and equality, the vanguard of workers' rights, but when our own members, our black and brown brothers and sisters feel there is a higher bar set for them we must take notice, we must address this perception of unequal access head-on and ensure that every member of the GMB feels confident that justice will be served regardless of the colour of their skin. I implore you, my fellow GMB family, to join me in demanding answers, demanding accountability, and demanding change. We cannot allow the shadows of discrimination to tarnish our union's reputation or the trust of our members. We must shine a light on the truth and take decisive action to rectify any disparities that may exist.

Congress, this motion proposes that we embark on a comprehensive sampling exercise, a deep dive in the race discrimination cases that have been unsupported over the past five years. We must leave no stone unturned, no voice unheard, this sampling exercise overseen by our



national race network and in collaboration with our dedicated national race officer will be our compass guiding us towards a fairer and more equitable future. Congress, a report alone is not enough. We must not stop at words on a page. We must translate those findings into tangible meaningful action. We must implement any recommendations put forward in the report in a timely manner ensuring that they become the cornerstone of our union's practices and policies. Only then can we truly eradicate any inequalities that may exist within our ranks. Let us demonstrate unwavering commitment to equality for all. Together we can build a stronger more inclusive union, a union that leaves no room for discrimination or prejudice. Congress, I will leave with you the words of Nelson Mandela, "It always seems impossible until it is done." Let's make this impossible possible. I move, Congress. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Hortense. Secunder from NE, Yorkshire & Humber?

CINDY GAVIN (NE, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, institutional racism is still very much present and, unfortunately, raises its ugly head far too often in our workplaces. In this motion we are asking you that we need to have a sound legacy for change for our members experiencing race discrimination and not to feel abandoned in their hour of need just because it may be a little more difficult than any other. This motion asks you to give our ethnically diverse members the confidence that they are being valued, that they are being listened to. The scrutiny of the GMB race network tasks our union with is a step in the right direction for this. I ask that you drive the change in attitudes and efforts that we ask for. Let's send a clear message to the members that we are committed to creating a culture that recognises and values their membership and all the services that they can access a part of that. Congress, I ask you all to be an upstander, not a bystander. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cindy. London, do you wish to come into this debate, you are part of the composite?

ROBERT WHEELER (London): Congress, following the work of the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce, and collective bargaining, a round table discussion and strategic litigation took place in April 2022 producing a report titled, "The Trade Union Challenge Winning Legal Race Discrimination Cases". The discussion came up with five key recommendations.

Unions should widen the scope of their criteria for supporting cases beyond whether the case has a 50% chance of success to wider reasons for pursuing them.

Unions need to share their experiences of litigation and identify strategic issues they can pursue jointly through courts.

Unions should take more ownership of the detailed cases with closer collaboration between union lay reps, union officials, and leave the representatives to enable more case preparation.

Unions should allocate resources to race equality cases.

Unions have an opportunity to identify potential test cases in the NHS and other public services.

General Secretaries of all unions were invited to sign the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce Race Charter and the pledge of this charter states: "On behalf of the union I pledge our commitment to progress economic social justice for black people. I pledge to adopt the antiracism manifesto to build an antiracism trade union movement." Thanks to our General Secretary, who signed this charter last year. As for black, Asians, and ethnic majority members in the GMB this motion is simply asking for a report to be presented at next year's Congress on how many race cases have been reported in the last five years, also how many cases have been undertaken and the success rate, as having such data is important in the fight for racial equity in the workplace, society, and in our union. Congress, I support this composite. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Robert. Thank you. North West & Irish, you have an opportunity to take part in the debate, if you want to; you do not have to. No? Does anyone wish to speak against these motions? Then I will take Kevin Buchanan to respond on behalf of the CEC and while he is coming up can I ask movers and seconders of Motion 49 and 50 to come down the front, please?

KEVIN BUCHAN (CEC): Responding to Composites 3, 4 and 5, on behalf of the CEC. We are asking that all three composites be referred back. First of all, Composite 3, to seek a 24-hour legal support helpline for members. While the motion would have cost implications which need to be examined and understood in more detail, the CEC recognises that special circumstances may apply for police staff members. We are concerned if

members are reporting a shortfall in access to essential legal advice. We are asking that this motion be referred so that we can gather more information on this issue from membership and shop stewards, and to consider at the CEC's Finance and General Purposes Committee the potential cost implications and whether to proceed with a tendering process for an appropriate provider.

On Composite 4, GMB legal services through UnionLine and in Northern Ireland, we are continuously working to improve the legal service including the appointment last week of Jamie Handley as our union's new legal director. There are well made points in the motion. We are asking that it be referred so that it can be considered in more detail. All workers in every workplace are continually exposed to hazards which may negatively impact on their health, whether that is from exposure to substances or poor ergonomic work design. In practical terms it is simply not possible for UnionLine to proactively attempt to address every potential workplace exposure. In practice, it is the army of GMB Health & Safety representatives who play a critical role of identifying such hazards and holding the employers to account with UnionLine becoming involved when harm is caused and a claim can be made. UnionLine has its own management and the firm is a joint endeavour with CWU. Congress can therefore not direct UnionLine to take particular actions. Campaigns should also be developed on a sector basis where there is a clear rationale within existing resources for doing so.

Finally turning to Composite 5, Employment Tribunal cases linked to race discrimination and ensuring access for GMB union support of black members in race discrimination cases. We are asking that the motion be referred so that the CEC can establish the facts. No one should be discriminated against because of their race at work or anywhere else. The GMB is determined to confront race discrimination. We understand that concerns have been raised in the wider labour movement about the processing of potential Employment Tribunal cases. The GMB does not rely on a 51% threshold. Legal assistance is covered under rule 26 and there is no mention in the rule of a fixed percentage of winning a case. Indeed, in questions of the use of disproportionate power, which often activate cases of sexual harassment, the moral imperative to see justice done is more important than a cool calculation of success rates.

Changing any form of legal assistance requirements would need rule amendment and a further examination of how that might impact the treatment of ET cases overall. We are making improvements to our legal

service. This work can include an investigation into whether the concerns raised by this motion are quantifiable and the race issues in general taking into account the TUC anti-racism taskforce work on tribunal cases and its 2022 report, Trade Union Challenge Winning Legal Race Discrimination Cases.

The CEC therefore asks regions involved in these composites to accept reference back so that we can work in earnest on the issues that they have raised. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. In terms of Composite 3, do Midlands accept the reference back? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Wales & South West? (*Agreed*) Thank you. In terms of Composite 4, I have heard Southern do; does London? (*Agreed*) Thank you. North West & Irish? (*Agreed*) Thank you. In terms of Composite 5, does Southern accept the reference back for Composite 5? Yes? (*Agreed*) And NE, Yorkshire & Humber? Yes? (*Agreed*) London? Yes? (*Agreed*) North West & Irish? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Because they are all referred, there is no vote.

*Composite Motion 3 was REFERRED*

*Composite Motion 4 was REFERRED*

*Composite Motion 5 was REFERRED.*

## UNION ORGANISATION: BENEFITS AND SERVICES

THE PRESIDENT: We can go straight on to section 6, which is union organisation: benefits and services. Can I have the mover of Motion 49, please, and then can movers and seconders of Motion 247, 249, and 250 also be ready to come down the front.

### **CONVALESCENT VENUE FOR OUR MEMBERS**

#### **MOTION 49**

#### **49. CONVALESCENT VENUE FOR OUR MEMBERS**

This Congress During Covid times the invaluable convalescence home in Dawlish had to close its doors to members of our union and others.

Last year there was a motion to look into a suitable premise for this and unfortunately nothing suitable was available.

The CWU owned Elstead Hotel and training centre in Bournemouth has the facilities and trade union background to operate as an appropriate convalescent home for our members needing a place to go. We have GMB members and a solid recognition agreement here..

Congress, we request that the GMB look into this venue and the options available to use this venue with other unions to have the appropriate facilities, to allow the members there stability in their employment and our members needing time to recover from illness.

**X20 LEEDS CENTRAL BRANCH  
NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER**  
*(Withdrawn)*

PHILIP BOYES (NE, Yorkshire & Humber): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. Congress, we need to clarify the reasons for our motion and what we are trying to achieve. A huge member benefit was the convalescent home in Darlish, Devon. This venue was used by our members to recover from ill health, including stress. Unfortunately, during Covid this facility had to close its doors. Following this we had a motion last year asking the union to find another suitable venue. We understand the union has been unable to find a venue that is both suitable and financially viable.

The Halstead venue in Bournemouth is a hotel and training facility owned by the CWU. All the staff are proud GMB members. The GMB officer responsible for the Halstead has confirmed that the CWU have not yet sold the venue and that the property development company and any deal would be dependent on planning permission being given to convert the property into residential apartments. This has not been given yet.

We urge the CEC to monitor this situation and register interest should planning not be given. A registration of interest is not a commitment; it is the start of a conversation that could lead to a commitment. As GMB we currently utilise this venue regularly for training and residential mostly by the Southern Region and community groups but with the fully functioning spa, gym, and pool, we believe that it would be an ideal venue for members approaching the end of their recuperation.

The union has changed in the way we work and requires officers to focus on campaigning and lay officials to take on the servicing work. Let's be clear, Congress, this is a huge amount of work on top of other work commitment that we now take on. The effect of all these changes means that the increased pressures and demands and nature of servicing handled by our lay members naturally increases pressure on our mental and physical health, so a facility like this could be really useful. Other trade unions have these facilities available, including Unite's venue in Eastbourne, which is run commercially as well as for member benefit.

We urge the union to look into all options and encourage all our lay members to assist and to highlight potential venues that the union could potentially invest in. The CEC has made its position clear and asked us to withdraw this motion but as a region, while we respect that, we thought

that the conversation needed to be brought to the floor, also that a member benefit of this nature needs to be kept firmly on the GMB agenda. With this in mind we thank Congress for listening and for hopefully keeping this conversation going but, Congress, we now withdraw this motion in line with the CEC request and thank everyone for listening. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Philip, and we appreciate that. Thank you, NE, Yorkshire & Humber for agreeing to withdraw.

*Motion 49 was WITHDRAWN.*

THE PRESIDENT: We can move on to Motion 50.

## **NATIONAL SUPPORT FOLLOWING A FATAL ACCIDENT IN THE WORKPLACE MOTION 50**

### **50. NATIONAL SUPPORT FOLLOWING A FATAL ACCIDENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

On the 3rd of December 2020 there was a tragic explosion at the Wessex Water site in Avonmouth, near Bristol.

The lack of safe systems of work in place led to four people losing their lives and not coming home from work that day. Three employees of Wessex Water (one being an apprentice) and a contractor. Brian Vickery who was 63 Years of age and vastly experienced, was a GMB Union member.

Brian was survived by his Widow and three sons. He was their rock, and also a very much missed friend and colleague to many of us.

Thankfully the death of a member in the workplace is a rare occurrence. It is though extremely stressful for Work-Place organisers to deal with the aftermath.

Reflecting on our efforts to support the bereaved family, whilst the Branch Secretary received excellent support from the FTO and regional staff - we as a branch feel that instances such as these are so serious and emotional that families should receive support from GMB National Office.

Allowing for a more detailed and cohesive response from the union and ensuring that the families have access to support, assistance in claiming from the funeral benefit, fatal accident benefit and providing them with a detailed explanation of what they are likely to face in the future and the level of support that can be given to them by the Union and its legal partners.

We ask that this support be provided by the Union until all legalities are concluded.

### **WESSEX WATER BRANCH X45 WALES & SOUTH WEST**

*(Referred)*

CHRIS MARSH (Wales & South West): Congress, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 there was a tragic explosion at Wessex Water site in Avonmouth near Bristol, which led to four people losing their lives. Three were employees of Wessex Water, the other a contractor. One person who died in that accident was a 16-year old apprentice. Brian Vickery, who also died in that accident, was 63 years of age and vastly experienced. He was a GMB union member.

Brian was survived by his widow and three sons, he was their rock, and a very missed friend and colleague to many of us. Thankfully, the death of a member in the workplace is a rare occurrence. It is extremely stressful for workplace organisers to deal with the aftermath. Reflecting on our efforts to support the bereaved family, whilst I the Branch Secretary received excellent support from the full-time officer and the regional staff of the union, as a branch we feel that instances such as these are so serious and emotional that family should receive support from the GMB National Office, allowing for a more detailed and cohesive response from the union, also ensuring that families have access to support in claiming benefit such as the funeral benefit and the fatal accident benefit, and providing them with a detailed explanation of what they are likely to face in the future, and the level of support that can be given to them by the union and its legal partners.

Colleagues, we ask Congress to support this motion and, lastly, all I would like to say is God bless Brian, Ray, Luke and Mike, who died on that day, they are forever in our thoughts, and I would like Congress to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. Secunder?

PAUL HUNT (Wales & South West): Congress, you heard my colleague tell you about the devastating circumstances surrounding the explosion at Wessex Water back in 2020. Hinckley Point C is currently the largest international construction project and it is situated within the Wales & South West Region. In November last year, Jason Waring, one of our members, working at Hinckley Point, tragically lost his life whilst at work. Jason was 48 years old and left a wife and four children. Jason was from Nottingham but like many employees working on Hinckley Point he stayed on campus throughout the week which created a second family of colleagues. This is the way of life for many on this site.

On that tragic day in November 2022 our GMB Health & Safety Reps were all at hand to give their support and guidance for the company, and colleagues who were on shift that day. Matt and Julian, who are with us here today, were those very individuals who gave that essential support and for that we thank you. (*Applause*)

From that day it was clear we needed some intervention to help Jason's colleagues deal with the trauma of events and it was transparent that we needed well trained mental health champions to be at hand for our

members. The region has created a bespoke mental health training package for reps on site and it is without a doubt a leading programme of ongoing support we offer our members within Hinckley Point.

Colleagues, there needs to be a national link-up to offer specialist support to our reps and activists who are undertaking a role of extreme importance, they need national support to deal with fatalities at work and help them support our members to the best of their ability. Please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. If there is no opposition then I will ask June Minnery to respond on behalf of the CEC, please.

JUNE MINNERY (CEC): On Motion 50, national support following a fatal accident in the workplace, the CEC is asking the motion be referred. It is thankfully rare for GMB members to be killed at work and one death is too many. Every fatal incident is different, every investigation has unique features, and the response from GMB is always specific to the circumstances as a result. There are elements of this motion that can be implemented in a relatively straightforward fashion. Funeral benefit and fatal accident benefit are covered by rule and can be explained by getting guidance but support during any investigation by regulators or police will be impossible to set in constructive guidance, primarily due to the risk of prejudicing the investigation process.

The development of a set of core principles for GMB officers and providing support in fatal accident circumstances could be beneficial but would require wide consultation across GMB, which could not realistically be completed before GMB Congress 2023. So, Congress, to sum up, the CEC is asking for Motion 50 to be referred. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, June. Does Wales & South West agree to refer? (*Agreed*) Thank you. That means there is no vote and once again thanks to NE, Yorkshire & Humber for agreeing to withdraw. Thank you.

*Motion 50 was REFERRED.*

THE PRESIDENT: That moves us on to section 7, Social Policy: Transport and could the movers and seconders of 252, 254, and 255, also come down as the last motions of the day. Can I have the mover of 247, please?

## **SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT WORKERS**



## **MOTION 247**

### **247. SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TRANSPORT WORKERS**

This Congress deplores the Conservative Government's attacks on our vital public transport system. Public transport is essential, not just to get many to work, but to connect us with family, friends, and social, volunteering and caring activities.

Our National Rail services are being run down and our rail unions are being demonised for fighting for a safe and reliable railway and defending decent terms and conditions for workers.

Our Bus services are chronically underfunded across so much of the country and we are seeing services withdrawn, not enhanced. The bus network in London, which so many other cities look to as a model, is being starved of funds by a punitive funding deal enforced by the Government.

This Congress resolves to send a message of support to all other unions engaged in industrial action to defend public transport and transport workers, and to publicise action to branches enable GMB members to support picket lines.

#### **X59 NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH LONDON**

*(Carried)*

RAJA NAVEED AHMED (London): First-time delegate at Congress, and second time speaking. *(Applause)* Public Transport workers play a crucial role in ensuring that people can move around cities and towns. They are responsible for operation of buses, trams, and ferries, and providing a safe and reliable service to passengers. However, these workers often face a range of challenges and difficulties, including low pay, long hours and exposure to health and safety risks. One of the key challenges facing public transport workers is low pay and many workers in the sector paid minimum wage or closed wage despite the fact that they are responsible for the safety and comfort of thousands of passengers each day. This can lead to high levels of stress and dissatisfaction among workers, which in turn can impact the quality of service provided to passengers.

Another challenge facing public transport workers is the long and often irregular hours that they are required to work. This can impact their health and wellbeing as well as their ability to maintain a work/life balance. To address this issue transport authorities should consider implementing policies and for more flexible working arrangements, such as job sharing, part-time work, and remote working. This can help to reduce the stress and strain on workers, and improve their overall job satisfaction. Finally, it is important to recognise the valued contribution that public transport workers make to society. They are responsible for keeping people moving and for ensuring that cities and towns remain connected and accessible. To show appreciation for their work government and transport authorities should consider providing public transport workers with additional benefits, such as access to affordable housing, healthcare, and education. This can

help to improve the quality of life for workers and attract new talent to the sector.

Supporting public transport workers is essential for ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of public transport services. By addressing the challenges and difficulties faced by workers, transport authorities can improve the quality of service provided to passengers and create a more equitable and sustainable transport system. This can help to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and promote economic growth and social development. Madam President, I move the motion. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Raja. Secunder?

BRENDON DUFFIELD (London): £31bn, what could you buy with £31bn, new hospitals, invest in vocational training, or perhaps payments to increase the poultry Universal Credit sums many families suffer through the cost-of-living-crisis, the damage created by the Conservatives and the populist politicians who have promised the earth, and given Gt. Britain dirt. £31bn will get you a subsidy for your UK rail companies and help pay individuals in charge as a reward of £145,000, or displaced persons (UBA) of £155,000, you start to wonder why those striking on railways for better pay are the targets of the Conservative press, who are busy hiding the real cost of bonuses and cultures that lead to renationalisation of the railway, which have been in the pockets of privateers.

The situation with buses is so different, with the situation that unprofitable routes are cut at a moment's notice and users are left without services while drivers are paid less than reasonable salaries and often facing bullying and intimidation by management. The railway dispute has seen the UK government trying to vilify unions and claiming they have no involvement in negotiations when we all know that the sweaty hands of the Conservative corporate has its fingers marked all over the rail companies' pay and conditions, and negotiations. As a union we must help support our comrades in this workplace and also engage with specialist unions to support the aims of educating our members. Only with a consolidated effort can we make changes. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brendon. It is only because we are nice and early that I am letting people go over the red light. The mover of Motion 249?

## **LOCAL AUTHORITY OPERATION OF BUSES**

## **MOTION 249**

### **249. LOCAL AUTHORITY OPERATION OF BUSES**

This Congress notes that private and commercial operators have substantially reduced the quality of local bus services, prioritising profits and not the needs of people.

Many people rely on buses to attend work, school, and vital medical appointments. Bus services also play a crucial role in reducing our carbon emissions, pollution, and congestion.

The prohibition placed on local authorities by the Government prevents them from effectively managing their own bus service.

This Congress resolves to:

1. Ask the General Secretary (or other appropriate senior union official) to write to the Secretary of State for Transport and request the repeal of, or amendment to, the Transport Act 1985 to allow local authorities to; a) operate their own buses, and b) to do so without any preconditions.
2. Create a model motion, supporting the repeal of, or amendment to, the Transport Act 1985, as a resource for GMB Branches and GMB supported Councillors.
3. Request that GMB Branches and GMB supported Councillors promote the adoption of a motion supporting the repeal of, or amendment to, the Transport Act 1985 by their local authority.

### **M20 MILTON KEYNES CITY BRANCH LONDON**

*(Carried)*

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): I stand before you today to ask for your vote in favour of this motion to give the union a mandate to push for repeal or amend the Transport Act of 1985, one of Thatcher's gifts, to allow the local authorities to operate their own buses without any preconditions. It is no secret that private and commercial operators have significantly reduced the quality of our local bus services prioritising profits over the needs of the people. The result is that many people who rely on buses to go to work, school, attend vital medical appointments, have been let down by the lack of an adequate service. Furthermore, bus services play a crucial role in reducing carbon emissions, pollution and congestion, especially now that bus companies are introducing electric buses into their fleets. Therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure that the needs of the people and the environment are more prioritised than the profits of private corporations.

The current prohibition placed on the local authorities by government prevents them from effectively managing their own bus service. This is unacceptable. It puts the interest of private corporations before the needs of our people. We need to change this and we need to change this now. We need to improve the quality of our bus services in our communities to reduce the carbon footprint and ensure the needs of our people are

prioritised. We cannot continue to let private corporations profit ahead of the people.

Please support this motion so we can write to the Secretary of State and campaign for a change in legislation to allow local authorities to operate their own buses without any preconditions. This will give the power back to the people and allow local authorities to put the needs of their communities first. We have the power to make a difference and it is time to take action. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Luke. Secunder?

CATHERINE JONES (London): Over the many years the bus routes have disappeared in rural areas. This means that people are not able to use public transport for appointments, work, or ordinary working everyday life. In every area there are buses, they are infrequent, no buses for them to use and with no frequency. People are focused to using other transport which usually means running a car and which causes more pollution and congestion and large layouts of costs. Currently, the bus companies want to make profit for their shareholders. The shareholders are usually not the ones who use the buses. We need a bus service that fulfils the needs of users and potential users but allowing local organisations to run a non-profit bus service then any money they receive is subsequently put back for the service, and by giving the councils free range they can design routes that fit the needs of the users. By giving what they want will encourage other customers to use this service to help make the money and to be self-funding. In the current economic climate, many people subsidise to make ends meet realising a cheaper bus service would help. We would be helping individuals to cope day to day and not extra money for shareholders. By allowing local organisations to run bus services for those who use them, working people and middle-class who are struggling to provide for their young families facing huge costs, child costs, and pensioners, and other disabled, they can be given a bus service they deserve. Please vote for this motion so we can revise or amend the 1985 Transport Act so the organisations can operate their own buses without any penalties. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Cathy. Then the mover of Motion 250, please?

**PUBLIC BUSES, NOT PRIVATE PROFIT  
MOTION 250**

## **250. PUBLIC BUSES, NOT PRIVATE PROFIT**

This Congress recognises the enormous cuts our local bus services have faced because of a decade of austerity enforced by the Tory Government in London.

The current for-profit model has left workers and passengers at the mercy of a bus service not operated in the interests of people in the North East.

Conference notes:

GMB bus drivers in Sunderland were recently forced to take industrial action after a below inflation pay offer.

The company who own Stagecoach have repeatedly put profit over bus drivers and passengers. The newly announced North East devolution deal would give a new Mayor Powers to franchise bus routes.

In Greater Manchester new franchises are already being awarded.

Conference instructs Northern TUC to:

Form a cross union campaign calling for the bus franchise process to begin on day one of a newly elected Mayors term.

Lobby Mayoral candidates in the upcoming mayoral election and council leaders on the need for busses to be franchised.

Lobby Mayoral candidates in the upcoming mayoral election and council leaders on the need for strong protection for workers to underpin any franchise contracts.

### **R40 SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR GENERAL BRANCH NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER (Carried)**

LESLIE TIMBEY (NE, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, comrades, for too long London politicians ignored the local bus networks, refusing to invest in this service and letting the public and the workforce down. Some areas in the North East of England have no bus service on a Sunday. What a disgrace. The companies that run these services continue to put profits before passengers, communities, and our members, the staff. The newly announced North East Devolution Deal will give the newly elected mayor the opportunity to put things right so let's work together with our comrades in the Northern TUC to make sure the mayor franchises the service on day one of being elected. This means lobbying all mayoral candidates to commit to franchising and ensure that workers' rights and protections are put in place to underpin the future of the bus service. All of us, every single one of us here, will use a bus so let's make sure that these bus services are run as good public services for us all, not for private profit. We need a

public bus service that is fit for purpose, not lining the pockets of the likes of Stagecoach and Go North East. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Les. Secunder?

SUE ATKINSON (NE, YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE): Second-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Buses may not be the most glamorous of topics but it is one of the most vital. Millions of people rely on a bus route every day. They take us to work, they take our pensioners to the shops, they take our kids to schools and colleges, they provide vital links to public amenities, and prevent people from being isolated. In short, buses are vital public services yet they are not run in the interests of the communities that they serve, rather they are run for private profit.

Where I live in Darlington I see this every day. Since our solid municipal bus service was given to Arriva we have seen the services deteriorate. Rural non-profitable routes have been slashed leaving people without services, cut off from families and friends. The service has become unreliable so more people opt out of the services fearing the bus will never arrive, so the service gets less passengers and in turn gets worse. Buses should be seen as a vital public service and with more and more power being devolved to direct elected mayors GMB has a great opportunity to get the politics to bring our buses back in-house.

Congress, buses should be run in the interest of those who operate and use them rather than operate as a cash cow for the huge corporations.

Congress, let us make sure our buses are reliable and affordable, and safe. As the words of a well-known nursery rhyme go, *The wheels on the bus go round and round*. Oh, no, they don't because they are privatised.

(*Applause*) In the words of Angela Rayner, public service should belong to the public. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I second.

(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sue. I am really pleased you got to the rostrum on your second time to Congress. Well done. Nobody wishes to speak against it? Then can I ask Dave Flanagan to respond on behalf of the CEC, please?

DAVE FLANAGAN (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 249 and 250.

First, turning to Motion 249, Local Authority Operation of Buses, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We support fully our bus networks. The 1985 Transport Act opened the door to the fragmentation and privatisation of our local bus networks. Some municipal operators have survived but the 2017 Bus Services Act shamefully introduced a ban on local authorities in England forming new municipal bus companies. Our qualification is that the GMB has already helped secure a commitment from the Labour Party that a future government would repeal this clause and developing this policy may be a more effective use of GMB's resources than campaigning for the current government, which is ideologically committed to privatisation to change its course.

Secondly, Motion 250, Public Buses, not Private Profit, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. The CEC applauds the Stagecoach workers who took a stand in defence of decent pay. We recognise that the fragmentation and privatisation of bus services was a social disaster and that Tyne and Wear have been at the forefront of efforts to re-regulate bus services. We are seeking to support this motion with the qualifications that the NE, Yorkshire & Humber region would be best placed to lead on this campaign, and that where GMB has bus sector members support for an individual franchising scheme must always be an issue for branch consultation. Congress, please support both motions with the qualifications laid out. Thank you.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 249? (Agreed) Thank you. NE, Yorkshire & Humber on 250? (Agreed) Thank you. I can put them all to the vote with the CEC also supporting Motion 247. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? Motions 247, 249, and 250 are carried.

*Motion 247 was CARRIED*

*Motion 249 was CARRIED*

*Motion 250 was CARRIED*

THE PRESIDENT: Just before I take the mover of the last three motions, could delegates who went to the Midlands regional function last night check their raffle tickets. The pink ticket 241-245, I have a green ticket 91-95, I think that might mean he has a prize, but we can email, apparently, these raffle details to the regional delegate leads, so that is anybody who went to the Midlands regional function last night. Thank you.

That takes me to the final motions of the day, so can I have the mover of 252, please?

**WHERE BUSES GO, TAXIS GO**  
**MOTION 252**

**252. WHERE BUSES GO, TAXIS GO**

This Congress demands that Local Authorities give Taxis and wheelchair accessible Private Hire Vehicles, access to all bus lanes throughout the country.

Not allowing taxis and wheelchair accessible vehicles is a restriction of trade, causing longer and more expensive journeys for the travelling public.

**G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH**  
**LONDON**  
*(Referred)*

MIKE TINNION (London): Solidarity to the bus workers around the country. Congress, Transport for London has failed. It has failed to regulate, failed to balance its books, failed the travelling public, and failed the transport workers. London Taxis were once an integral part of London's integrated transport policy. The current Mayor removed taxis from his plans without reason or warning a few years ago and in doing so he allowed the taxi trade in London to be removed from priority and major road arteries by Transport for London, the Corporation of London where all the banks are, and local authorities like Camden, a Labour-held council.

Getting around a city like London can be a challenge for everyone. However, for the visually impaired and disabled, navigating the transport system can be particularly difficult. One factor that exacerbates this challenge is the exclusion of taxis from some of London's bus lanes. This policy not only creates inconvenience for these vulnerable groups but also limits their access to transport and puts them at a disadvantage. The exclusion of taxis from bus lanes in areas such as Bank Junction, Bishopsgate, and Tottenham Court Road, has a significant impact on the mobility of visually impaired, disabled, and vulnerable passengers. These groups often rely on taxis to navigate the City as public transport can be challenging or inaccessible for them.

To address the disadvantages faced by visually impaired and disabled and vulnerable passengers it is necessary to change the policy that excludes taxis from certain areas and bus lanes in London. Allowing taxis in these lanes would improve the accessibility and safety of transport for



these groups and would also benefit other passengers by reducing congestion and travel times. This policy has been successfully implemented in other cities such as New York and Toronto and has resulted in improved transport options for these vulnerable passengers. Bus lane access would also reduce travel times and costs as taxis would be able to take a more direct route instead of the enforced diversions. Furthermore, allowing taxis in all these lanes would benefit other passengers by reducing congestion and implementing an overall efficiency of the transport system.

Congress, we must demand access for these lanes and with our own GMB councillors and our GMB Assembly members, we have to remember that policies are not law and they can be changed, and they must be changed. I move. *(Applause)*

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

TRACY BEESON (London): Congress, the mover of the motion has outlined the issue as he works in the industry and sees it every day. Just before the last bank holiday we have seen press stories that TfL run a pilot scheme which allows non-emergency NHS ambulances, police cars, and fire service vehicles, to use the London bus lanes. In the case of the passenger transport ambulances taking patients to and from the hospitals, this resulted in a 20% drop in missed appointments. TfL have restricted access to other vehicles to free up the lanes for buses. We welcome this motion being referred and ask the GMB to speak to TfL and local authorities to consider expanding bus lanes to allow other licensed vehicles carrying the public as they too could be carrying patients. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracy. Mover of motion 254.

## **ULEZ: THE DEMONISATION OF THE POOR AND DISABLED MOTION 254**

### **254. ULEZ: THE DEMONISATION OF THE POOR AND DISABLED**

This Congress is concerned that the expansion of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) out to the borders of the M25 Motorway is forcing the poorest workers out of their vehicles, and onto a public transport system that is not fit for purpose.

We call on the Mayor of London to curb this new form of taxation that will only impede the disabled and the poorest in society.

### **G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH**

**LONDON**  
(Referred)

MIKE TINNION (London): There is a bit of a theme. Congress, Transport for London has failed, failed to regulate, failed to balance the books, twice, failed the travelling public, and failed in its cycling policy. Transport for London cycling policy has failed; we give up hundreds of miles of Central London drive space to cycle lanes in a bid to reduce the number of vehicles in Central London, with the aim to get the taxi working man out of his vehicle, and it has failed. As I drive around London I would say 90% of the vehicles in Central London are there for work purposes, couriers, taxis, private hire, the majority being ULEZ compliant creating a gap in TfL's funding.

Now the ever expanding Ultra Low Emissions Zone is spreading right to the edges of the M25 motorway where its impact will be devastating. You think it is just a London thing? Think again, it is going to come to a street near you very, very soon. Those in the low income families just cannot afford to buy ULEZ compliant vehicles, let alone the £12.50 a day it will cost to run a non-complying vehicle in their own road. Bus and rail services are being slashed and in many cases are running at maximum capacity at certain times of day. To the elderly, the infirm, and the poorest in society, their little run-around is essential to get to work, the doctors, and hospital appointments, or just to get to the shops. The Mayor of London has a scrapping scheme where you can trade in your old vehicle and take on the crippling debt of a new vehicle. One of my neighbours is 83, she drives every day, she is a volunteer at the local hospital where she goes to see her friends and does her bit for the community, In August all that stops. ULEZ will literally take her life away. We cannot allow this to happen to her and thousands of people like her.

London Region has already started a campaign to lobby the Mayor and, Congress, we have to stop the ULEZ expansion, we must use our political resources within parliament and local councils and the London Assembly who, by the way, have been deafeningly quiet on this subject, the other one that is making a noise about it is the Mayor of London because he has written a book about it. Congress, I move. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Secunder?

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): I stand before you today to express my deep concern about the expansion of the ULEZ; its borders are going out to the

M25 and this policy will have devastating effects on the poorest workers, the disabled members of our society. The ULEZ will force people out of their vehicles and on to public transport but I have just been up here speaking about how public transport is not good enough. It is not fair, it is not right, and it is the policy that demonises the poor and the disabled members of our society, it enforces them to pay for something that is not their fault.

The research that Sadiq Khan himself has asked for and has consulted within this whole process shows that the ULEZ makes very little difference to air quality and yet it has a massive impact on the lives of those who can least afford it. This is nothing but a money grab. It is unacceptable. We cannot allow this to happen. We must call for the Mayor of London to curb his new form of taxation and to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. We cannot let ULEZ become a policy that discriminates against those that are already struggling to make ends meet.

Therefore, I urge you to vote in favour of this motion and send a clear message to the Mayor of London that the rest of the country that we will not stand by and allow the demonisation of our poor and our disabled people. We must protect those who are most in need and ensures that our policies are fair and just for all. I have just had my car written off and it was a diesel car, it was not going to be ULEZ compliant, and it had dropped by £400 before it had even come in, so I have already lost £400 because of this. They say, "Oh, you can sell your car," because I was not eligible for the scrapping scheme. They are saying, "You can sell your car and buy a new one." No, the money for the cars that are not eligible has already dropped so it is an even bigger gap. Yes, I am pleased to support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I think you moved it, did you not, Luke? No, you seconded it. I have got lost in this. That was 254. You are right, you did second it. I am confused. The mover of Motion 255 now, please?

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ZERO EMISSIONS VEHICLES TARGETS MUST NOT BE DONE IN A WAY THAT DAMAGES THE CAR INDUSTRY AND ITS SUPPLY CHAIN  
MOTION 255**

**255. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ZERO EMISSIONS VEHICLE TARGETS MUST NOT BE DONE IN A WAY THAT DAMAGES THE CAR INDUSTRY AND ITS SUPPLY CHAIN**

Congress calls on the current Government and Labour as the next alternative government to be flexible in the application of a Zero Emission Vehicle mandate which comes into force in 2024. On current plans manufacturer's car sales are obliged to be 22% of its total sales. This percentage rises steadily for the

rest of this decade. If this figure is not met manufacturers face fines or be forced to buy carbon “credits” from other manufacturers. The size of the fines have yet to be announced.

Congress calls on the Government to use a carrot approach rather than a stick approach to developing electric vehicle production and sales in the UK. If the targets are not flexible, the fines and the costs of credits are too high there is a serious risk of damaging the UK car industry and its huge supply chain. If the damage is too severe the manufacturers will be driven overseas to jurisdictions with less challenging targets with the loss of jobs in the car factories and the supply chain.

Congress considers that the transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 must be done in a way that does not destroy our industrial base which is the basis for our prosperity as a nation. This has to be one the key factors in setting out roadmaps and targets on the road to net zero.

**B10 BARKING BRANCH**  
**LONDON**  
*(Carried)*

GAVIN DOWNEY (London): Congress, since this motion was submitted there has been major changes in the targets now being set by the EU which underlines the call for flexibility and how the UK government goes about implementing the targets for zero emissions vehicles. The UK has set a target for 2030 to phase out the sale of new cars fuelled by petrol and diesel and be replaced with electric powered cars using batteries. However, the EU, pressed by the German government, has a target of 2035 that will now allow vehicles to be powered by engines burning net zero synthetic fuels as well as batteries.

This is a major and very significant change in the economic landscape of the car industry. It will be interesting to see if the usual range of voices calling for close alignment between the UK and the EU on trade matters advocate the UK falling in line with the EU target of 2035 and allowing synthetic fuel powered engines as well as batteries. Any UK government given this background will be well advised to adopt maximum flexibility in implementing the target, even to the point of pushing the 2030 target back to 2035 and keeping an open mind about the use of synthetic fuelled engines as well as batteries. Serious money will be invested in net zero synthetic fuels with research and development. It is far too early to predict what the future holds in this. Fining manufacturers for not meeting arbitrary targets for electric cars in these circumstances would be madness. In addition, last week Fiat announced a £3,000 discount on its electric cars, so if you want one go and get one now, and said that demand for electric cars from consumers had levelled off since last year and was now running at well below the target of 22% based on current plans. Fiat asked for the Government to reintroduce the subsidies for electric cars

which ended last year. There is little point in forcing manufacturers to make cars that consumers are not prepared to buy.

In addition, to use the language of Nye Bevan about socialism being the language of priorities, one has to question whether it is the best way to spend scarce public money to achieve a target next year that no other country in Europe is trying to achieve. Flexibility has to be the name of the game here. When GMB representatives meet with Labour Party leaders, with other policy makers, they should spell out to them that the approach this Congress has adopted on this crucial issue is that the transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 must be done in a way that does not destroy our industrial base which is the basis for our prosperity as a nation. This is to be one of the key factors in setting out road maps and targets on the road to net zero. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gavin. The seconder, please, the last speaker of the afternoon.

GODWIN AKASIE (London): Congress, the motion is seeking to highlight the integrating part of the hash of friendly and fierce implementation of the emissions target which creates a huge additional burden to produce emissions to the new measures that have to meet the targets. Such measures may include significant increases in fuel taxes, increases in fines to vehicle manufacturers, and a ban on non-compliant vehicles on our roads, and just as the expected expansion of the ULEZ zone comes in on 29th August this year. The net result is a massive economic and financial burden on motorists and manufacturers. With the cost-of-living-crisis now affecting us all, the motorists affected by this are not in a position to upgrade their fleet at this time to meet the targets and may even miss out on the £10m scrappage scheme because of its inefficient nature. The additional unintended consequence will be on the manufacturers who will be left out of pocket by lack of space and accumulated stocks of unfinished products. Understandably, Congress, achievement is welcome of the emission target and may be an appropriate thing to do in the long run but there is every need at this moment for a more friendly, flexible, and balanced implementation approach to manage the integrating part of the process on the manufacturers and the motorists that have progressed for the good of the national economy, therefore, Congress, support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Great timing to end this, Godwin. Thank you. There is no opposition so can I ask Dean Gilligan to respond on behalf of the CEC please?

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on Motions 252, 254, both of which we are asking the regions to refer back.

On Motion 252, where buses go taxis go, we are sympathetic to the motion and we recognise that there are inconsistencies between local authorities' policies on the bus lanes used by taxis and private hire vehicles. Given that this motion could affect other groups of GMB members, including bus workers and local authority transport officers, we are asking that the motion be referred so that the issues can be examined in more detail. For example, it may be appropriate to have exemptions for bus lanes that form the spine of exceptionally busy and high frequency public transport services.

On Motion 254, ULEZ, the demonisation of the poor and disabled, the CEC agrees that without mitigation the cost of adapting to ultra low emission zones (ULEZ) will be hardest for those on low incomes to meet. This motion would take us beyond existing policy which calls for exemptions for some groups of workers and commit us to opposing ULEZ outright. This would have implications for most members of London and Southern Regions, both regions are campaigning on this issue and we are asking the motion be referred so that regions can consider the cause of the motion in more detail. To sum up, Congress, the CEC is asking for both motions to be referred. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Does London agree to refer motion 252? (*Agreed*) Thank you. And 254? (*Agreed*) Thank you. That means there is no vote so I can go straight to the vote on Motion 255. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? Motion 255 is carried.

*Motion 252 was REFERRED*

*Motion 254 was REFERRED*

*Motion 255 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: That brings us to close of the session this afternoon so have a very lovely last evening, Congress, and be back in the hall at 9.30 tomorrow morning.

*Congress adjourned.*