

**CONGRESS 2023**

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

.....

**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 THREE  
(Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023)**

.....

**Transcript prepared by:**

**Marten Walsh Cherer Limited,**

**2nd Floor, Quality House, 6-9 Quality Court,**

**Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1HP.**

## THIRD DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 6TH JUNE 2023

MORNING SESSION

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

Call to Order

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, Congress. I call Congress to order. Could I please call on Karen Dudley to move Standing Orders Committee Report Number 4.

### **STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 4**

#### **SOC REPORT NO 4**

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS

KAREN DUDLEY, STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MOVING SOC REPORT NO 4.

#### **BUCKET COLLECTIONS**

THE AMOUNT COLLECTED YESTERDAY BY GMB SCOTLAND FOR GUIDE DOGS WAS £924.04

(PLUS A TROLLEY COIN!)

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, I FORMALLY MOVE ADOPTION OF SOC REPORT NO 4.

KAREN DUDLEY (SOC Chair): Congress, I move SOC Report No. 4. Bucket collections. The amount collected yesterday by GMB Scotland for the Guide Dogs was £924.04. *(Applause)* Plus a trolley coin. I am quite sure that GMB Scotland will be quite happy to accept bids for the trolley coin, but I leave that down to you. President and Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 4.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. I am not expecting any opposition to that report but... No. In that case, I take the vote on Standing Orders Committee Report No. 4. All those in favour? Anyone against? *(Adopted)*

*Standing Orders Report No. 4 was ADOPTED.*

## **Regional Videos**

THE PRESIDENT: We will now play the Regional campaign videos for London and North West and Irish. Can I ask the speakers of Motions 183, 184, 186 and 187 to make themselves ready, please, to speak afterwards.

*(Videos of London Region and North West & Irish Region were played)*

THE PRESIDENT: That's two more brilliant videos. Once again, thank you to Warren, Denise and Paul, as well as the staff and members for those brilliant campaigns and your wins. Well done.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: GENERAL**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move onto motions to be debated under Social Policy: General. Can I ask the mover of Motion 183 to come to the rostrum.

### **FOOD EMERGENCY**

#### **MOTION 183**

##### **183. FOOD EMERGENCY**

Congress is concerned that with inflation standing at the highest it has been in 40 years and the food prices, along side energy costs, at record levels millions of people including millions of children are unable to meet their basic needs.

Congress calls on the CEC to demand that the government act now to declare a national food emergency and address the food crisis facing so many people.

Congress asserts that there is an urgent need to organise a national food emergency summit to determine how to resource and deliver a plan to ensure every citizen in the UK can access good quality, affordable, and nutritious food.

The government's food strategy was published on 13 June 2022. Congress condemns the government strategy for not going far enough to address the links between food & health and for largely ignoring the recommendations made by its own lead advisor.

Congress calls on the CEC to insist that any UK food strategy is subject to a work-led just transition to ensure a future of good, unionised jobs. Given the extent of food insecurity is the result of an earning and income crisis, not simply cost-of-living, Congress demands, in declaring a national food emergency, that the UK government and the devolved administrator's deliver:

- a. A rise in the National minimum wage to at least £15
- b. An immediate and substantial increase to universal credit: restoring £20 uplift, uprating benefits to keep pace with rising prices and bills and removing the five-week wait.
- c. Universal free school meals for every child throughout the year.

**M18 APEX SECURICOR**  
Wales & South West Region

*(Carried)*

ANDY MILLS (GMB Wales & South West): President and Congress, I move Motion 183. Congress, with inflation standing at the highest it has been in more than 40 years and the food industry costs at record levels, millions of people and children are unable to meet their basic needs. At Congress in 2021, Motion 252 called for a legal right for food. At Congress 2022 there was a CEC Statement on the cost of living. Again, in 2018, Congress passed a Special Report on Universal Free School Meals. The list goes on, colleagues, and we all know that it is only getting worse.

Motion 252 in 2021 asked for a legal right for food to be incorporated into the Government's National Food Strategy and, of course, we can all guess what happened. It was ignored. Within the Government's National Food Strategy, it states that the UK is likely to be self-sufficient in wheat, meat, eggs and vegetables. Well, colleagues, each of these products have nearly doubled in price. We understand that the cost of agricultural commodities – think of global gas prices – and we understand the pressures on our fellow colleagues, both farmers and fishermen. So to help everyone in the food-supply chain, we need a Government strategy which will make a difference now! Colleagues, with many people facing great financial problems and unable to afford life's essentials, the need for our support is increasing rapidly daily, and it is not going to get any better.

Congress, our jobs is to work to support people to make lives better, but the cost of food and other essentials is preventing people from securing that change,. More and more people are dependent on Government support. The Government are not listening and, colleagues, it is down to us to change this. With the situation getting into a crisis position, Congress calls on the CEC to demand that the Government act now to declare a national food emergency and to address the food crisis that millions of families are facing in the UK today.

We welcome the CEC supporting this motion and accept the qualification for a UK Food Strategy work-led transition. It should be done within GMB policy. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Is there a seconder?

IAN DAVIES (GMB Wales & South West): Good morning, President and Congress. I am seconding Motion 183. Congress and colleagues, the average price of food and non-alcoholic drinks in the UK have seen their sharpest increase in more than 45 years. Soaring prices are driving record high UK inflation and putting intense pressures on household budgets. More expensive items, such as bread, eggs, cereals, flour, butter and oil, all cause the average increase between 19.2% and 38% in March of this year. This is the sharpest 12-month increase since August 1977. Products such as meat, yoghurt and essential vegetables doubled in price. Congress, the rise of these essential food prices are forcing families to make stark choices. It is no surprise that nearly four million children don't have access to healthy nutrition and culturally appropriate food.

Many families in the UK are food insecure, making decisions between buying food, paying the rent or heating their homes. A lack of shops selling fresh fruit, fast-food outlets near schools and vegetables that cost three times more than the ultra-processed alternatives means that cheap food laden with salt, sugar and saturated fat is often their only option. Food banks, just in the Trussell Trust Network, saw the highest ever levels of need even more than during the peak of the pandemic as more people found that their incomes did not cover the cost of essentials. Between April 2022 and March of this year, 760,000 used a foodbank for the very first time. Yes, colleagues, 760,000 people used a foodbank for the first time ever in their lives.

December 2022 was the busiest month on record for foodbanks in the Trussell Trust Network, with a food parcel being distributed every eight seconds. The rising foodbank need demonstrates that more and more people are going without the essentials. We need to call upon the shambles of this Tory Government to enshrine in law the amount that is needed to cover bills and essential items. We hold this Government to task.

Colleagues, since I started my speech 15 families from just one foodbank organisation have received a food parcel. That's food for thought. Please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ian. Thank you. I call the mover for Motion 184.

**CARBOHYDRATES TO BE DISPLAYED ON ALL PACKAGING AND MENUS FOR  
DIABETICS  
MOTION 184**

**184. CARBOHYDRATES TO BE DISPLAYED ON ALL PACKAGING AND MENUS FOR DIABETICS**

This Congress believes that there is a need for carbohydrates to be displayed on packaging and menus.

As a type 2 diabetic and with a daughter with type 1 diabetes, I find it difficult to carb count and dose the correct insulin. Therefore, on behalf of the diabetic members in the union, just like the calories, salt, fat and sugar, we would like the carbohydrate values to be on all food packaging and menus.

We therefore call upon this Congress to start a campaign on the matter and lobby MP's.

**C36 COALVILLE BRANCH**  
Midlands Region

*(Carried)*

NATHAN KEIGHTLEY (Midlands) moved Motion 184. I bring to this Congress an on-going issue for many. In 2021 my eight-year-old was placed into intensive care. She made a good recovery but she is a Type 1 diabetic. Loads of thoughts and emotions went through my head about this. How was I to inject my baby girl? What does the whole diabetic thing mean for her life? Will she be able to do everything she was able to do before? She has always had a heavy carb diet – rice, pasta and so on – she's a fussy eater, and that's when things really started to hit home. Everything she eats and drinks will have to be assessed and counteracted with the insulin, if needed. We have to consider the slow release, fast release, blood sugar tests, arm sensors and key tones. Bang! My head was just done in. It was frazzled. Everything from now on is carb counted. Check blood sugar. This is scanned by using a mobile phone over a sensor attached to her arm. Then the fun begins; the carb counting.

Carbs are molecules. Your body breaks down carbs into glucose. Glucose or blood sugar is the main source of energy for your body cells, tissues and organs. We were given *this* book. *This* is like your diabetic Bible. You need to carry that around with you. You need to carry scales around with you to try and get the weight of the carbs, essentially.

The weight on packaging very rarely relates to the actual weight and size of the packet in front of you. Now you need a calculator as well. I don't know how a ten-year-old, which is how old she is now, is expected to get their head round that.

I would like this Congress to put a campaign together to get carbs put on all packaging and menus. Most menus have calories on them. If you have a look at the back of packaging, it is the real small one that you can't really see and you need about four pairs of glasses and a magnifying glass to be able to see the carbs on the back. It would make life so much simpler for parents like me and for children like Ruby to have the carbs put on to packaging and menus, really. It does hold her back. I am Type 2 diabetic now. There are probably a few diabetics in this hall who could possibly relate to it. We need more help with the carbs on menus and packaging really. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

HOLLY SHARP (Midlands): President and Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. I am serving in the East Midlands Ambulance Service at this time. *(Applause)* I am here to second Motion 184. This motion has been proposed regarding the labelling of food products and regarding the carbohydrate content. The proposed measures are aimed to enhance the awareness of consumers regarding the carbohydrate content, especially those with specific dietary requirements, such as diabetes, like myself. I have many other health problems as well. Also I am medically trained and I really, really, struggle to work out the carbohydrates and things.

I have first-hand experience on how difficult it is to be asked, as a diabetic, to cut don't realise what they are in. Without an app on my phone it is near impossible for me to navigate or keep track of my intake. Labelling of products with carb amounts could have numerous potentials and benefits on public health, which are improving blood sugars for people who are diabetic or pre-diabetic, coronary heart disease and helping people with weight management, which could reduce the risk of other chronic health diseases. I second this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Holly. I call the mover for Motion 186.

**IMPROVE OUR ENVIRONMENT AND MAKE OUR STREETS SAFER USING STREET SOLAR LIGHTING**  
**MOTION 186**

**186. IMPROVE OUR ENVIRONMENT AND MAKE OUR STREETS SAFER USING STREET SOLAR LIGHTING**

This Congress is aware of the rising costs of energy, and potential blackouts due to energy supply problems, so there is a need to act fast.

Poverty is rising and the cost-of-living crisis is turning many to crime, which is putting fear into the vulnerable.

Our streetlights are going out at night leaving people in fear and having to go to work in the dark and come home in the dark, worried for their safety.

Government spending on street lighting in the United Kingdom was 855 million Pounds in 2019/20.

The Local Government Association website states that local councils have seen a 37.5% increase in costs for maintenance and energy for street lighting.

With roads still needing 12 million pounds in funding there is a prediction of 3.6 billion pounds worth of added pressure to the councils' budgets.

We need to change, improve our environment, and reduce the damage and cost of our communities and make our streets safer.

The money is there, and solar lighting can help to make that change we need. Much reduced costs on energy for the improved safety of our streets and reduced maintenance is needed, further reducing costs. These are costs the taxpayer must bear associated with the increased crime and accidents caused by our current inefficient street lighting being turned off.

We are calling for GMB to ensure that streetlights stay on all night in order to make our neighbourhoods safe again and for them to be powered by solar energy.

When there is no road or foot traffic, streetlights can be dimmed by 30% brightness supplying 1000 lumen and the lamps could brighten up to 6000 lumen if motion is detected insuring brightness and safety at night.

The College of Policing, statistics in 2015 show that where streetlights are working there has been a reduction by 21% in crime on streets and property.

Crime rate statistics for England ( <https://crimerate.co.uk/england>) show that from 2021 to 2022 there has been a rise in crime.

|                  |                        |        |
|------------------|------------------------|--------|
| United Kingdom   | 79.52 per 1,000 people | +1.18% |
| England          | 77.49 per 1,000 people | +5.86% |
| Wales            | 75.16 per 1,000 people | +4.86% |
| Northern Ireland | 52.44 per 1,000 people | +8.16% |

Congress, we need to reduce this risk and make England bright again at night and know that our streets and pathways are safe at night, and that people feel safe so we are asking for the roll out of solar powered street lighting to be done quickly.

## **B22 BRAINTREE & BOCKING BRANCH**

London Region

*(Carried)*



ADRIAN STOHR (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 186 on improving the lighting on our streets.

Congress, we have seen the increase in energy costs rising beyond our control. As our council tax increases, councils may be looking to cut costs. As some of our taxes go towards lighting, we need to make sure that any council-cost savings measured are not at the expenses of our safety. In 2020 Lincolnshire estimated that street lights would cost them £1.95 million for the year, and previous years used to cost £4.5 million. This is because they changed to LED lighting and switched off lights from midnight to dawn, thus saving £2.5 million a year as well as reducing the carbon footprint.

Another example is Cambridgeshire street lighting, which costs a whopping £10.6 million and has been commended for being one of the best lit-up areas in the country, one of the top 10 places. With over eight million street lights in the UK costing the taxpayer heavily, more than £880 million in total in the Government's spending in 2018 and 2019. Our country became more costly to the taxpayer with our rising energy costs by as much as 37.5% with increased maintenance and energy costs rising.

Street crime and thefts are also increasing, making us all feel unsafe on our doorstep. Crime rate statistics regularly show that there is a rise in crime. Congress, we need to recognise that our members travel during the darker times to and from work, either with their own transport or walking along dark streets and pathways. Our member's safety is paramount. We need effective street lighting to keep our streets safe across the UK.

As a country, we need to continue to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce costs, but if you turn off the street lights for pathways, surely you encourage fear in the neighbouring areas.

What can we do? Well, I'll tell you. Solar street lighting is the answer with enough power to last the whole night. Reduce the lighting when no-one is around and, as you walk near to the lights, paths and roads light up to their maximum capacity. GMB needs a policy where these issues are raised locally, campaigning with our local authorities to have better cost-effective solar lighting and help to bring our carbon footprint and energy costs down. We cannot keep paying rising taxes with no benefit to us. Please support this motion, and go back to your councils and ask them to move to using solar street lighting.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Adrian. Secunder?

CATHY HOLLAND (London): Congress and President, I am seconding Motion 186: Improve our Environment and make our streets safer using street solar lighting. When I worked for Essex County Council one of the areas they decided to start cutting the lights was in Chelmsford. The only problem is that they turned them off near a station which was very dark, anyway. This led to many problems, and some of the people realised it was a safe way to commit various crimes, which I will not go into. After much debate they decided to turn certain lights back on again, but I am sure it is always on their agenda to cut them out again, but we need to think about how people who work at night are being affected. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Cathy. Thank you. I call the mover of Motion 187.

**LEGAL TENDER**  
**MOTION 187**

**187. LEGAL TENDER**

This Congress calls for the government to enact legislation to protect use of cash.

Since Covid more and more businesses are no longer accepting cash, this is not and should not be acceptable.

All people do not use cards but occasionally find themselves not being able to purchase goods as they only have cash.

This is also a concern for small businesses who regularly post on social media requesting people to use cash.

One business advertised

**BANK CHARGES**

This month our charges from the bank for taking payment via cards AMOUNTED TO £438.

And as you can appreciate, this is taken off any profit we make on our sales.

We would therefore appreciate it if you could PAY WITH CASH

As often as possible to ensure that we as a small business receive 100% of our income and the bank receive none.

It is also becoming more frequent now with airlines announcing that they are cashless airlines.

**W80 WESTERN EDUCATION BRANCH**  
North West & Irish Region

*(Carried)*

KAY DOHERTY (North West & Irish): President, I am moving Motion 187. Congress, we are calling on the Government to enact legislation to protect the use of cash. What is the cashless society? A cashless society is one where cash – paper and coin currency – is not used for financial transactions. Instead, all transactions are electronic. A cashless society is not in your interest. It is in the interests of banks and payment companies. Their job is to make you believe that it is in your interest, too. The true motive is corporate profit. The move towards electronic and contactless payments has been gaining momentum for some years, but increased rapidly during the pandemic to minimise unnecessary physical transactions.

A cashless society has advantages. One major advantage of going cashless is a reduction in crime. When people are handling less cash, bank robberies, burglaries and corruption drop. Cash is, essentially, untraceable. It is a useful tool for criminals. Those with technological ability to take advantage of a cashless society will likely find it is more convenient. As long as you have your card or phone, you have an automatic paper trail of all transactions.

What are the disadvantages of a cashless society? There is no alternative source of money in the case of technical issues or hacker activity, lack of control over spending without a physical reminder. Elderly people may be less comfortable with technology and less able to make the switch from physical currency. Rural communities could also be left vulnerable because of poor Broadband and mobile connectivity. People with low incomes or debts tend to find cash easier to manage, too.

Another potential disadvantage concerns security. Although abandoning cashing helps to reduce theft and fraud, for many consumers data and cyber security issues are a worry and without justification. Threats from organised cyber criminals are very real. They find new ways of breaching established security systems. During the pandemic many more of us made online and mobile purchases.

A concern closely linked to security is privacy. Identity theft and compromised personal information has potential dangers in a cashless economy. Many people also feel that cashless spending is more difficult to control. It is simply too easy to over-spend when you are not looking at a physical sum of money.

Looking around there are many indications that we are heading towards a cashless society. The phrase itself implies some sort of externally-controlled dystopian financial existence from which none of us will be able to escape. The fact of the matter is that most of us have already voluntarily opted into this system and have found it more convenient to handle our financial matters this way. Whether or not we will all be forced to participate in a cashless society will depend on a number of factors that will continue to be explored and researched in the coming years. Our eyes are all open at this point. Thank you. (*Applause*)

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

LOUISE LYONS (North West & Irish): President, I am a first-time delegate. (*Applause*) I am seconding Motion 187. Congress, it is a fundamental human right for every person to conduct their own financial affairs in order to promote and maintain their human dignity and exercise personal choice and autonomy.

I work alongside adults with additional needs in a daycare setting. My job is to encourage and develop the capabilities to manage day-to-day finances. It is an amazing feeling for both them and myself when they take control or part control in decision-making processes affecting their lives. Having no access to physical money due to lack of technology skills reduces their understanding and their ability to carry out tasks in relation to managing their own finances, such as current bank balances, saving and spending money.

Most of the people with additional needs who I work alongside benefit from local charities for social interaction and physical exercise. These local charities depend a lot on donations from collection boxes in shops or fundraisers such as cake sales, but do not have the facilities to operate electronic transactions for such one-off events.

Changing to an electronic legal tender has the potential to get the people I work alongside, their family members and friends into a host of financial liabilities, up to and including financial fraud as the individuals I work with, most likely, would have to give their bank details to a friend or relative to access their cash or balance. A cashless society means the closure of local banks and Post Office branches, resulting in job losses within our local communities. All of this adds to the rise of individualisation and loneliness which is currently happening within local communities. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Louise, stay there. A little bird tells me that it's your birthday today. (*Cheers*) So thank you for spending your birthday with your GMB family. On behalf of the Congress, I wish you a very happy birthday. (*Applause*)

LOUISE LYONS: Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: I ask Cath Sutton to give the CEC response, please.

CATH SUTTON (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC and Motions 183, 184 and 186, which we are supporting with qualifications. The qualification on Motion 183 – Food Emergency – is that the motion calls for any UK food strategy to be subject to a work-led just transition should be made in line with GMB policy and conditions. What a just transition should entail is set out in the CEC Special Report on Energy and Environment agreed at Congress 2021.

On Motion 184 – Carbohydrates to be displayed on all packaging and menus for diabetics – our qualification is that we are not in a position to make any expert interventions on the science behind this, and we defer to our colleagues in sister unions, such as the British Dietetic Association, BDA.

Finally, on Motion 186 – Improve our Environment and make our streets safer using street solar lighting – our qualifications are that this should be a policy across the UK, not limited to England, and that campaigning on the issue should be localised in the hands of the groups of members where this is an issue. They should consider lobbying their local authorities to make cost-effective choices where it is a solar-powered light or other fuels. Our final qualification is that we have the members who maintain and operate gas-powered lights in small areas of London, and we will always seek to preserve the jobs. Thank you, Congress. Please support these qualifications. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Cath. Thank you. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 183? (*Agreed*) Does Midland accept the qualification on Motion 184? (*Agreed*) Does London accept the qualification on Motion 186? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I can now put that to the vote.

All those in favour of Motion 183, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

All those in favour of Motion 184, please show? Thank you. Anyone against?  
That is carried.

All those in favour of Motion 186, please show? Anyone against? That is  
carried.

The CEC is supporting Motion 187. All those in favour, please show? Anyone  
against? That is carried.

*Motion 183 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 184 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 186 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 187 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 5, which is Social Policy: Justice  
Congress, just before we start dealing with Motion 189, could you, please,  
bring into Congress any toiletries that you don't use this week and put into  
a box at the information desk in the foyer so that it can go to a local  
foodbank and be added to all the parcels that go out from there. Thank  
you.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: JUSTICE**

### **MOTION 189**

#### **ADDRESSING THE COLONISATION ISSUE & REPARATIONS**

##### **189. ADDRESSING THE COLONISATION ISSUE & REPARATIONS**

Congress notes the terrible impact that the British Empire had in terms of the extensive colonisation  
programme that has been in place since the 1600s. Only in the last few decades have colonised  
countries been declaring their independence from the Crown. There are well established reports in  
terms of what the crown effectively stole in terms of assets from these countries and death and  
destruction of indigenous people would also be a common feature.

Congress is called upon to:

1. Work with appropriate and relevant groups/ organisations and members to make resources available  
to ensure a more truthful lens is looked through on the issue of the British Empire and Colonisation.
2. Campaign for reparations is adopted as a priority.

### **E10 EALING BRANCH**

London Region

*(Referred)*

TARANJIT CHANA (London): Congress, I am moving Motion 189 – Addressing the Colonisation Issue and Reparations.

Congress, approximately 24 million Africans were forcibly removed from Africa and enslaved. During the Transatlantic slave trade Britain transported and enslaved over three million Africans. The scale and brutality of the Transatlantic slave trade sets it apart from the past and present form of slavery.

Slavery was abolished in the UK in 1807, but this was not the end of slavery. People could still own other human beings, but it ended the trade from Africa to the British colonies. It was later outlawed across the British Empire in 1833 under the Slavery (Abolition) Act. Slave owners were given money by the British Government to compensate them for the loss of their slaves. The UK paid £300 million in reparations to 3,000 families who owned slaves. In an article in the University of Brighton website in 2019, it stated: “Sixty-nine slave owners and former slaver owners had properties in Brighton & Hove in the 19<sup>th</sup> century”. In June 2020, on the Brighton & Hove Council website, it said: “We must recognise that our wealth is built on sugar, trade and enslavement”. Congress, reparations could be paid directly to descendants of slaves and countries where slaves originally were taken from and put into communities of people of African descent to heal on-going inequalities.

In 2021 Jamaica requested compensation for the Transatlantic slave trade from Britain. Britain is still one of the wealthiest countries in the world. There are British companies that grew on the backs of enslaved people. There is never going to be a right time to introduce reparations. The call for reparations for people of African descent is a trade union issue. Britain transported three million African slaves and maintaining the imbalance of wealth, privilege and power in society in the form of institutional racism is a trade union issue. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Secunder?

PETER BIGGS (London): Congress and President, I am from the Harrow branch of the London Region. As a first-time delegate and speaker (*Applause*) I have been given two minutes to say why I am seconding this motion. I could spend the time reciting the history of the Transatlantic slave trade. I could spend the time spouting off statistical data about the economic debt owed to individual countries in the continent of Africa and the Caribbean who are still being impacted. Or I could spend the time

reeling off the names of many individuals, organisations and institutions who benefited economically and socially over generations to the detriment of not only the indigenous working class people of the African diaspora, but also the indigenous working-class people in the UK.

British slave owners were still receiving compensation and reparations for the loss of their chattel up until 2015. I have just realised that I have not printed off the rest of my speech. *(Laughter and applause)* But, basically, the motions that are asking for a sum of money to be found for reparations, and those that are asking for a date for reparations to be paid, but what we are asking for is for a grown-up conversation, for that conversation to start, so that maybe that date could come a bit closer. That is why I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Peter. I call the mover of Motion 191.

## **CONTINUING OUR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE FOR THE WINDRUSH GENERATION MOTION 191**

### **191. CONTINUING OUR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE FOR THE WINDRUSH GENERATION**

This Congress restates our condemnation of the behaviour of this Government towards the Windrush Generation many of whom are our members and activists, and we re-commit to supporting their continuing fight for justice and the right to live permanently in the UK as legal citizens.

We note that leaked documents have been discovered stating that the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, is looking to ditch the key commitments made following the Windrush scandal despite the Government previously accepted all 30 recommendations and reforms made by an independent review into the Windrush scandal.

This is a kick in the teeth to anyone seeking justice for all those whose lives were destroyed.

This is a real kick in the teeth as 22 June 2023 will mark the 75th anniversary of the arrival of HMS Windrush and the contribution they've made to British society.

We call for GMB through our parliamentary, equality and Race Groups to highlight and condemn this despicable U-turn and force the UK Government to keep ALL the promises they made to those seeking justice.

**E20 EDMONTON AND ENFIELD BRANCH**  
London Region

*(Carried)*



OBADINA OMOTAYO (London): Congress and President, I am moving Motion 191 on Windrush. Congress, we welcome keeping justice for Windrush alive in the GMB agenda, and on June 22<sup>nd</sup> we mark 75 years. We continue to condemn the Government's behaviour towards the Windrush generation, who are fighting for the right to stay in this country. In 2018 the Home Office established the Windrush Task Force in order to give people the documents they need to demonstrate their status here and a formal inquiry took place. But in 2018 many British citizens, mostly from the Caribbean, were detained, deported and told they were illegal immigrants and despite having the right to live in Britain.

Following the Windrush Task Force and the Windrush Scheme the Home Office launched the Windrush Compensation Scheme in April 2019, which followed the launch of an exceptional payment scheme. Many are still waiting for compensation. Many have died before getting it. In 2020 the Windrush Review was published, making practical recommendations, all of which were originally assented to by the former Home Secretary, Pritti Patel. What prompted our motion is that in January this year we heard about leaked documentations where the Home Office had done a U-turn on their promises to honour the recommendations. We think that this decision the recommendations is a real slap in the face for us and the Windrush campaigners. Five years ago, after we brought this scandal to light, our motion is asking our race groups to keep this issue alive. The victims of the Windrush scandal have suffered a terrible injustice. Let's mark 75 years as National Windrush Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> June to fight justice for all the Windrush generation. No more going back on promises. Please support. (*Applause*)

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

SHARON WALDRON (London): Congress, I am seconding Motion 191 on Windrush. In 1948 after the war many Afro-Caribbean migrants came across on the HMS Empire Windrush liner leaving their loved ones behind to support Britain, to support our infrastructure and taking up much-needed jobs in transport, hospitals and many other skilled and low-skilled jobs. We owe them a debt of praise and thanks. They lived, worked and raise their families here in the UK, contributing so much to our society and still do. It has now been five years since the Windrush scandal was first uncovered. Whilst many seem to want to move on from the scandal, the people wrongly deported were denied their pensions, benefits, medical treatment, they lost their jobs, homes and more but they can't move on. Their lives were utterly devastated by the institutional racism of the Conservative

Government. In fact, we know that many of the people treated so badly by this Government have since died whilst waiting for justice.

To add insult to injury, instead of trying to put this historical major wrong right, the Home Secretary is looking to row back on the reforms that they previously committed to. We need to repair the massive collective harm and put right this burning injustice for once and for all. Instead, the Government dragged their feet and went back on their promises. For example, refusing to establish a Migrant Commissioner, as recommended by the Windrush Lessons Learnt Review. This is a disgraceful time in our history.

Dawn Butler MP has been our voice in Parliament and she pledges that she won't let Parliament and the Government forget what they have done. Congress, enough is enough. Let's have justice for Windrush. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sharon. I call the mover of Motion 192.

**GRENFELL FIRE DISASTER FINAL REPORT MUST GIVE RISE TO SERIOUS  
CHANGES TO RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST IN REGULATION TO PREVENT  
AVOIDABLE DISASTERS  
MOTION 192**

**192. GRENFELL FIRE DISASTER FINAL REPORT MUST GIVE RISE TO SERIOUS  
CHANGES TO RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST IN REGULATION TO PREVENT AVOIDABLE  
DISASTERS**

On June 14, 2017, in a wholly avoidable disastrous fire at Grenfell Tower seventy-two people including 18 children were killed, 129 homes were destroyed, and damage was caused that is still ongoing and will never be repaired. It was the most serious crime committed on British soil this century.

Police investigations remain underway, and the four-year public inquiry is nearing its final stages. The evidence presented at the enquiry paints a clear enough picture about the failures of the British state, the wrongdoing of various corporations and incompetence of a string of public institutions. This is the outline set out by journalist and author Peter Apps in his recent book on the disaster which summarises the evidence at the enquiry.

A long list of failures emerged from the enquiry. Some key contributors to the disaster were as follows:

- In the name of getting rid of “red tape” in 1984 the Government swept away over 300 years old building regulation from the time of the Great Fire of London in 1666 which prohibited the

use of flammable materials on the exteriors of buildings. This was small state “ideology” in action.

- Cladding consisting of two sheets of aluminium bonded together by a core material that was solid petroleum which was sold by corporations was allowed to be used on the exterior of people’s homes in spite of the extreme fire risk being known. The enquiry was told that the amount of solid petroleum in the cladding on four sides of the twentyseven storeys building was the equivalent of having a petrol tanker with 5,000 gallons of fuel at the base of the tower to feed the fire. Yet corporations sold this dangerous material for cladding high rise buildings and the British state and the public institutions charged with ensuring the safety of the public allowed this to happen.

- Instead of requiring non-flammable materials like rock wool to be used for insulation of the building, flammable plastic insulation materials were allowed on high rise buildings, and it was sold by corporations and was used on Grenfell. It was the fumes from this material that killed many of the residents. There is also a link between these fumes and up to 20 Grenfell firefighters now being diagnosed with rare cancers. This was yet another serious failure by corporations, the British state and the public institutions responsible for public safety.

- Evidence of the very great dangers to residents from several fires in high rise buildings with flammable cladding and flammable insulation in Britain and around the world was either ignored or brushed aside. In particular no action was taken to implement the changes to the “stay put “ rule in dealing with fires in high rise buildings with flammable materials on the exterior called for by the coroner in her report into the six deaths as a result of a similar fire at the high rise Lakanel House in Camberwell in 2009. Many if not most of the people would have been saved at Grenfell if the coroner’s call had been heeded. The enquiry found a response from the senior civil servant involved which said “we only have a duty to respond to the coroner, not kiss her backside”.

Congress considers that the book by Peter Apps “**Show me the bodies- How we let Grenfell Happen**” should be required reading for all elected representatives and senior civil servants in public bodies across UK.

Congress also considers that serious criminal charges should be brought against many of those responsible for the disaster. This should be in addition to the civil claims for damages.

Congress considers that Grenfell and the final report of the public enquiry should lead to soul searching in Parliament and in other public bodies as to why gross negligence and gross incompetence is not dealt with, why the undue lobbying by vested interests is tolerated rather than banned and why ideology is allowed to determine the approach to matters like public safety that require instead forensic expert risk assessment.

Parliament and the public bodies should also examine how regulations, intended to keep the public safe that fail to do what is required, are allowed to become and remain as law. What scrutiny was involved in the buildings regulations that allowed the equivalent of a 5,000 gallons of highly flammable petroleum to be wrapped around the outside of high rise buildings? Something is badly wrong.

The Grenfell disaster has led to a serious loss of trust in Government and public bodies not to allow wholly avoidable disasters to happen. After Grenfell, for example, can the public now fully

trust those responsible not to allow an electricity power system to develop which risks power cuts that threaten public safety and disorder when the lights go out? The combination of vested interests, ideology, negligence and incompetence is a formula for disaster. Congress calls for this loss of trust to be addressed and restored. This should be a very high priority for an incoming Labour Government.

Maybe new public watchdogs should be established with powers to investigate and root out gross negligence and gross incompetence in government and other public bodies and to challenge the undue influence of vested interests. These watchdogs should be able to respond to complaints from the public faced with stonewalling on such matters.

### **I35 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH**

London Region

*(Carried)*

DENNIS RISEGLI (London): Congress, I move Motion 192 on Grenfell.

Congress, six years ago this month 72 people were killed and 129 homes were destroyed in a wholly avoidable disastrous fire at Grenfell Tower in London. The final report of the public inquiry into what happened is expected soon. The points set out in this motion are in a book by the housing journalist, Peter Apps, who attended every single day of the long-running public inquiry. Please read the motion as I do not want to repeat it, but the book gives you more information on the full extent of everything that went wrong with such lethal consequences.

Congress deserves to hear the whole picture. Taken as a whole, this adds up to an appalling litany of how not to ensure the safety of the public. Instead, I will focus on an exchange between the judge heading the inquiry and an absolute expert on fire safety. The judge asked him to state simply what was in the substance that bonded together the two sheets of aluminium in the cladding on the outside of the building. The expert replied: "In essence, it was solid petroleum". The judge asked him to estimate how much petroleum was contained in the cladding on four sides of 27-storey tower. The expert said that it was equivalent to having a petrol tanker with five thousand gallons of fuel at the base of the tower to feed the fire. The judge asked whether this unbelievably dangerous material had been allowed by the British state. The expert said he had the ordinance from the Great Fire of London prohibiting flammable materials on the exteriors of buildings was repealed as red tape by the Tories in the 1980s. Worse, rather than requiring the insulation inside the cladding to be non-flammable, flammable plastic insulation materials were also allowed. It was the fumes from this insulation that killed most of the 72 people who

died. The inquiry found that there had been destructive fires in hi-rise buildings with flammable cladding and insulation abroad, and in the UK in the years before the Grenfell Tower fire. However, the authorities seemed impervious to heeding the lessons from those terrible fires. One example stands out. There was a fire in 2009 which killed six people in the hi-rise Lakanal House in Camberwell which had flammable cladding and insulation like that at Grenfell. The coroner asked the Government for their "Stay Put" policy to be changed. This advice was based on the experience at Lakanal House and elsewhere that it should no longer apply for residents living in hi-rise buildings with flammable cladding and insulation. These fires had proven to be lethal death traps where the residents had not got out as soon as possible. The Government Minister who was to respond to this official request of the coroner was advised by the senior civil servant responsible for fire safety, emailed as following: "We only have a duty to respond to the coroner, not kiss her backside".

If the advice had been heeded, all the deaths could have been avoided and all those killed would still be alive. There is no doubt that criminal charges should be brought against many of those responsible and civil claims for damages shall run into hundreds of millions. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Dennis, well done. Secunder, please.

BEN CAMPBELL-WHITE (London): Congress, I am seconding Motion 192 – Grenfell Fire Disaster Final Report must give rise to serious changes to restore public trust in regulation to prevent avoidable disasters.

According to Paul Gilroy in his essay *Never Again – Grenfell*, I quote: "It was not an accident. The uncontrollable fire that stole those precious lives had been predicted. Warnings were issued, alarming arguments had been comprehensibly laid out and the dangers were far from secret, but the risks were not acted upon".

They say that time is the enemy of justice. Six years down the line, the public inquiry into the Grenfell disaster has yet to be published. No criminal charges have been brought to date. Amongst the refusals to accept blame, there is a merry-go-round of buck passing. There are many issues in the build up to the tragedy: poor regulations, inadequate legislation as well as the influence of commercial interests. What we do not want for the members of the Grenfell community of Ladbroke Grove, Notting Hill and beyond is for the outcome of the inquiry to be swept under the carpet just for the system to fail us again. GMB must play its part in holding the

accountable to account and to never forget. Congress, I urge you to remember and support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. Can I call on Sarah Hurley to give the CEC response?

SARAH HURLEY (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, asking for Motion 189 to be referred.,

Education on colonialism and how it impacts on our society is an important part of understanding injustices that are prevalent and have a greater impact on our black and ethnic minority members. We are asking that this motion be referred to the CEC Race Sub-Steering Group and National Race Organiser so that we can consider who we might engage. The motion does not suggest any outside groups we might engage with for training so there will need to be consideration by the Race Sub-Steering Group and who would be placed to work with and the cost of such. The Race Sub-Steering Group will also consult on a position on reparations. Congress, please refer. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. Does London Region agree to refer Motion 189? (*Agreed*) Thank you. That means there is no vote. The CEC is supporting Motions 191 and 192. All those in favour of Motion 191, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 192, please show? Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 189 was REFERRED.*

*Motion 191 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 192 was CARRIED.*

## **POLITICAL SPEAKER**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now hear from our political speaker. The last time this speaker addressed Congress was in 2021, which was virtual, held online as Covid-19 kept us apart. That year we were fighting technical difficulties as well as the Tories, and we were grateful for his patience and his support for GMB members fighting fire-and-rehire at British Gas. I am so pleased that he will be addressing GMB Congress for the first time in person. Congress, please give a warm GMB welcome to the Leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer. (*A standing ovation*)

SIR KEIR STARMER MP (Leader of the Labour Party): Thank you, Barbara, for that introduction, and for your great service to this great union. Thank you, also, Congress, for that very warm welcome. It is always a pleasure to be in Brighton in the sunshine, and especially when the sun is beginning to shine on Labour's arguments.

There is more work to be done. Of course, there is, and I am under no illusion that the hardest yards are ahead of us. We need to be prepared, disciplined and relentlessly focused on the future. We need to show that we are ready to provide the leadership that this country so desperately needs, to meet Tory attacks with hope. But make no mistake, if we keep demonstrating that we are a changed Labour Party, that in everything we do we put country first and that we know what true service means, then together we have a golden opportunity to shape the future to the interests of working people firmly and decisively.

All around us the world is changing. It is becoming a more volatile place. Revolutions in technology, energy and medicine are reshaping the economy and our public services. Climate change is driving global instability. War has returned to our continent. Our job is to lead working people through these headwinds, to provide the confidence that Britain will be better for their children and to bend the future so it delivers the stability, the dignity and the hope that they need.

Congress, a tide has turned. The rest of the world is moving on from the outdated ideas our opponents provide. The economic argument which has held back working people is now on the back foot. Put simply, people aren't going to take it any more. (*Applause*) They've had enough, and you know that. When you ask the key questions now of "Where does growth come from?" and "Who's it for?" The Tory answers just don't wash. When it's your interests on the line, your services being cut and your bills and taxes going up, the Tories say "Well, we're all in this together". But when it comes to protecting their interests, it's "Well, this is just the way of the world". People are seeing through that. After 13 years of the Tories, it boils down to this: one rule for them and another for working people. (*Applause*) Congress, the prize at the next election is not just to win, not just to change our country, but to put this damaging idea in the ground for good. That's what my Labour Party, this project, has always been about.

I have always said that we have different roles, different ways of fighting for working people: party and movement. I was there in 1986, in Wapping, when the police charged the picket, doing my job as a legal observer. Everyone

who stood in solidarity with the print workers was doing their job as well. But, you know, I remember thinking that night "There's one institution that isn't doing its job here: the Labour Party". No, because the Labour Party was in opposition. It was on the sidelines. It was impotent and powerless. That's the condition of opposition, and I can't stand it! Gary, I know you share that frustration, because just look at the price that working people pay for it: the stagnation, the economic pain, the cuts to public services and the attacks on working people and this Movement.

In Parliament, again this week, there's a Bill that takes away your hard-earned democratic rights. I can stand here and say "We will fight it and we'll repeal it". Mark my words, we will. (*Applause*) But this only demonstrates the prize of power. The Labour Party is never doing its job when it is in opposition. That is our clause 1. But power must always have a purpose, and I accept that the Labour Party did drift away from its fundamental cause of serving working people. So I want to be clear. Everything I do, all the changes we are making are in the service of this goal. They are grounded in a new project which understands that the Labour Party can only restore hope in Britain if we, once again, become the natural home for working people. (*Applause*) This is in our DNA. It's who we in it for? It's who we serve. It's who we wake up in the morning and fight for. It's who we have in our mind's eye when we make decisions. It's who we back to grow our economy. The answer, the only answer, the Labour answer, is working people. Friends, my Government will work every day to serve their interests and protect their future.

This is about respect and dignity. For me it goes deep. My dad was a working man, a toolmaker, who worked all his life in a factory. He always thought that people looked down on him for that, and it weighed him down. It chipped away at his esteem, and there are millions of people in this country today who feel just like my dad did. That's not good enough. I want Britain to be a country where people don't have to change who they are just to get on. At the very least, a bare minimum, whoever you are, whatever your circumstances, however you contribute, whether you work for Asda, Amazon or the Ambulance Service, you deserve respect. That's not just a moral imperative. It is also a vast spring of potential ready to be tapped, because when people are respected, when they feel their contribution carries weight, when they are able to bring their whole self to their work, that they are treated fairly and with dignity, then their shoulders lift up, their belief comes back and hope and pride are restored. When I tell you exactly what my Labour Party will do for working people in the pros of policy and rights, I never lose sight of the emotions, the values and the



ordinary hopes that sit behind them, the dignity and esteem which comes with respect in the workplace. That's our project.

It's a project for carers, for couriers, the ambulance drivers, the supermarket staff, those in the office, those on the factory floor, those working long shifts, night shifts, 9 to 5s, those working part-time and those working full-time. My Labour Party is the party for those who keep us safe, who create the wealth, who make up the backbone of Britain. This is a project for working people all across our country. *(Applause)*

Congress, those are the people that the country clapped for during the pandemic. Even the residents of Downing Street found time to stumble into the street to do it. *(Chuckling)* But how have they been repaid?

Take carers, as an example. This is a subject very close to my heart. For many of them, every time they had to self-isolate during the crisis, they did so at their own expense with no sick pay. That's not on! Let me be very clear. Those days are coming to an end. *(Applause)* A country that doesn't respect care work is an uncaring country. So we will strike a fair-pay agreement for every care worker in the country. *(Applause)* We will get you around the table and the deal you make will set a new floor, a higher floor, with more progression, more training, more rights, better standards and, yes, fairer pay. A fair pay deal for our carers. *(Applause)* That's what people clapped for and that's what Labour will deliver. This goes to the heart of the Tories' failure. It's why we have had 13 years of chaos which has left our economy broken. They simply don't get that growth comes from working people, and because they don't understand that fundamental, they can't provide the secure foundations to build our country's future. To be honest, I'm not even sure they see the problem.

If the City of London races ahead whilst the rest of Britain stagnates, so long as there is a hint of growth on his spreadsheet, Ricki Sunak will claim that that is fine, but it is not. If you leave that many people behind, a nation can't grow fairly. You can't do it with low wages. You can't do it with insecure jobs and bad work, with a stand-aside Government that doesn't fight for the future, without a proper industrial strategy. The average British family is £8,800 poorer than in other advanced economies, economies like those of France, Germany and The Netherlands, economies that have better collective bargaining, that have stronger workers' rights and a fairer share of wealth across their country. So we will strengthen the role of trade unions in our society. *(Applause)* Like you, I want to see Amazon and businesses like it recognise trade unions. *(Applause)* Nobody does their

best work if they are wracked with fear about the future, if their insecure contract gives them no protection to stand up for their rights at work or a proper safety net that doesn't support them properly. That's what Labour's New Deal for Working People is about. That's why we will ban zero-hour contracts, extend parental leave, strengthen flexible working, better protection for pregnant women, close the ethnicity pay gap, fundamental rights from day one, statutory sick pay for all, no more one-sided flexibility and no more fire-and-rehire! *(Cheers and applause)*

For years working people have been told that good pay, fair work and dignity are somehow barriers to growth. No more! A reformed labour market, where we finally make work pay and provide the security denied to working people for decades, is my mission on growth. But, you know, we are not a nation apart. The world around us is changing and changing fast. President Biden once said: "When I hear 'climate change', I think jobs". When Labour sets out our mission for Britain to become a clean energy superpower, we are thinking jobs, too. For too long, Britain has allowed the opportunities of the new energy technologies to pass us by. Without a plan the energy industries that we rely on will wither and decline. The Tories think it is the market doing its job when British industry falls behind. It is not some glitch in their model – it is their model! Yet our allies around the democratic world are waking up to the threat of energy insecurity and the opportunity of economic security. Change is coming and, yes, it can unsettle us. But mark my words, on my watch, good jobs, good union jobs, will be fundamental for that change. *(Applause)* Decent pay, respect, dignity and fairness, cleaner, safer work and a new and better infrastructure for Britain are the purposes of our Party, and they are historic prizes that we will win again.

I won't pretend that just because a technology is greener that that automatically makes working conditions fairer. So as new nuclear, battery factories and offshore wind re-power Britain, Britain will supply strong chains that create jobs, skills and decent wages here in Britain. *(Applause)* We will work with you to seize the opportunities of hydrogen, carbon capture and storage. Our Green Prosperity Plan, like President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, is our plan for growth. Because we are Labour, it is a plan for working people, their jobs and their prosperity.

We will create a new company, GB Energy, and through that vehicle we will take advantage of the opportunities that we have. Because it is right for jobs, because it is right for growth and because it is right for energy independence, then, yes, it will be publicly owned! *(Applause)* GB Energy

will be good for Britain and good for business. It will have twin goals; leading the way in better jobs and lower bills. I am clear-eyed about how tough the challenges that face us are. We have all seen what happens when politicians see change as something to stand and stare at in awe, when governments surrender working people to the power of the market, when the future comes and people are left behind. That is why the next election is so important for the future of working people. Holding back the future is no way to growth. But, equally, there is no way to growth that doesn't involve bending and shaping that future. We can create a new business model for Britain, one which creates economic security and grows not just our productivity but our hope and our optimism. Labour in government will work with unions and industry. We will always have a stake, we will always have skin in the game and we will always see the fight for working people as our driving purposes because for us this is personal. Together we will make Britain work better, together we will give working people their future back and together we will build a better Britain. Thank you, Congress. *(A standing ovation)*

I think and hope we are now going to have some questions from members of the audience, members of GMB. If I have got this right, they are going to come to the microphone so that everybody can hear the questions. I think the first question is from Mary.

MARY: Good morning, Keir. We have undertaken a great amount of work to construct the New Deal for Working People, a campaign mandate to win the next general election for families and fairness. Can you give us a firm commitment that the Labour Party will fully support the New Deal and be bold in campaigning for a fairer and more equal country for millions of families and working people?

SIR KEIR STARMER: Yes.

MARY: What can I say to that?

SIR KEIR STARMER: Friends and colleagues, as we have been in opposition we have developed very few bits of legislation that are ready to hit the ground on day one, but our New Deal for Working People is one of those bits of legislation. In fact, it was the first bit of legislation that we drafted. I am very proud that it was agreed with the trade unions. We worked on this together. Many people in this room contributed to the New Deal for Working People. It was announced, as you know, by Angela Rayner back in 2021 at our conference. I have, obviously, mentioned it in my speech now,

Mary, by setting out some of the issues that are in it. We have made a commitment that this will be legislation in the first one hundred days of a Labour Government. It's a big "Yes". It's a prepared piece of work, it's a joint piece of work and we've got a timetable for implementing it. The final thing I would say, and I said this when we launched the document, is that this is why winning an election is so important because that piece of draft legislation has two futures. If we don't win the election, it'll gather dust on a shelf. You will then have other legislation brought in by the next Tory government that does even more damage to your rights. That's one route.

The other route is that we go forward, we win the election and we implement it within the first hundred days together with you. That's the future I want for our country. Thank you, Mary. *(Applause)*

SARAH ALLEN-A'HERNE: Hi, Keir. My name is Sarah and I'm from the GMB Wales & South West Region. You just said that care work is really close to your heart. Care workers are paid just a few pence above the minimum wage on average. The average hourly wage for a care worker was £10.03p last year. Labour has said that it would look at implementing a fair pay agreement, which you have just mentioned, within the social care field, with an hourly minimum, but you have not said what that minimum should be. What do you think it should be?

SIR KEIR STARMER: Sarah, let me make it clear that I deeply respect the work of care workers, not least because, as you may know, my sister is a care worker. Therefore, I know week by week, month by month and year by year just how hard it is working in the care sector. We are absolutely determined to change this and to change it comprehensively. That's why the fair pay agreement is so important. Our commitment is that the first fair pay agreement I want to be for carers. I want that to be the lead case, if you like. That will be negotiated by you, because this is a fair pay agreement which involves the unions agreeing across the country, so I don't want different care providers picking off groups of workers wherever they are. I want one structure, one agreement across the country. That is intended, as I set out in the speech, to set a higher floor for every single care worker. That will involve terms and conditions, dignity and respect. I think I am right in saying – Sarah, you will know this better than me – that one in three people who leave the care sector do so to join the NHS, and they do that because they feel there is better progression in the NHS. As a result, we have to deal with progression, training and respect, but it also has to deal with pay, and it has to be higher pay, as I have set out.

As to the rate of pay, you will be negotiating that around the table and you will know what you think is right in whichever year it is – 2024, maybe 2025 – that we are able to get this agreement over the line. You will negotiate that right and you will know what is right for your members. Once that is done, the agreement will then be binding for all care workers, including those who are not able to negotiate a better rate for themselves. That is how I see it working, Sarah. Thank you for everything you do, but this is going to be an important part of what I hope we will be able to do in the very early years of the next Labour Government. Thank you, Sarah.  
(Applause)

DAVE DOUGLAS: Morning, Sir Keir. I represent North East, Yorkshire & Humber. I am an engineer with British Gas. I am also speaking for all the workers in the gas industry. There is a lot of talk about just transition in the energy sector, but right now it is just that: talk. The UK has lost and continues to lose out on high-quality unionised manufacturing. Will you give serious support to workers like me in the energy sector and our families by calling for a moratorium on the future offshore wind projects until the UK has secured the onshoring of jobs in this sector so that we can have a proper jobs transition?

SIR KEIR STARMER: At the heart of your question is a really important issue which is jobs in the UK, and I think many people in this union and working people across the country have been badly let down, and we have to do more about it, Dave. I actually don't think a moratorium is the right way forward, but I do think we have to use vehicles like GB Energy, which will be a publicly-owned vehicle, where we determine where the jobs are to ensure that they are here in the UK, and that we have incentives in contracts to look at supply chains and where the jobs are for the supply chains.

Let me give you an example that shows that I absolutely understand where you are coming from. I was at Hinckley Point C yesterday, amongst other things, meeting the GMB reps there. That's a fantastic project about the future of nuclear in this country. It is way behind schedule because the Government have been dithering and delaying. As Gary Smith pointed out to me this morning, in the supply chain to Hinckley Point the only thing that is made in Britain is the concrete. Everything else comes from abroad. That's got to be wrong. Talking about renewables, Dave, in Whitelee, which as you know is the onshore windfarm just outside Glasgow – I think it's the biggest one in the UK – I went there to see for myself how it works and to understand the challenges. When I asked how many of those 350 wind

turbines were built in Britain, the answer was none of them. They came from Indonesia because we had lost the race to get those jobs.

Dave, at the heart of your question is something I believe in very strongly, which is the next generation of jobs, the jobs that we need to secure and hold onto, the jobs of the future, we have to find a way of making sure that they are here in the UK, and I want the main jobs, the project jobs, in renewables and other sectors in the UK. I also want the supply-chain jobs to be here in the UK as well. Thank you very much, Dave. That was a really important point. *(Applause)*

JASON SMITH: Keir, I am the delegate from North West & Irish Region. Labour has said that when it is in power it will bring back the Duty Accord, that would mean that outsourced workers are paid the same as those in-house. You have also said that you would bring about the biggest wave of in-sourcing in a generation. Can you tell us what contracts you would prioritise in bringing back?

SIR KEIR STARMER: Yes. Jason thank you for raising that important issue. This is, obviously, as you know, not a new issue. This one has been with us for a very, very long time. That's why the two-tier code was introduced by the last Labour Government. But then, shamefully, it was scrapped by the Coalition Government as soon as they got the first opportunity to do so. So we have to reinstate it. We have to get it back. What Angela Rayner is working on, with the GMB, I'm glad to say, is how we not just bring it back but how we strengthen it. Those discussions are going on with your colleagues. That's is the key issue.

Rachel Reeves set the direction of travel, really, because she talked about the biggest wave of in-sourcing, and that for me is the most important thing; to make sure that we get the skills, the respect, the pay and the terms and conditions exactly where they should be. So on that code, we need to reinstate it. Please keep working with Angela on how we strengthen that. I look forward to working with you on it as well. Thank you very much, Jason. *(Applause)*

GARFIELD HYLTON: Good morning, Sir Keir. I am a GMB Coventry striker. *(Cheers and applause)* I would like to take this opportunity to convey this to you, please. Amazon is one of the world's wealthiest corporations but offering the workers in the UK a pay rise in pennies. Despite this, Amazon is a beneficiary of payouts from the public purse, receiving £684 million in central and local government contracts since 2018. Amazon is an

irresponsible employer driving down pay and conditions, refusing to recognise its workers. This makes the Conservative Government happy with this state of affairs.

Our question to you is about GMB and Amazon. What will your Labour Government do to stop this flow of public money to Amazon if they continue to refuse recognition of the union? *(Applause)*

SIR KEIR STARMER: Thank you for raising that subject. Let me start by acknowledging the campaign that GMB is running on this. It is a fantastic campaign, a really important campaign and one that I fully support. I want to see Amazon recognise trade unions. It is really important I say that, and I am clear about that. I want to say to this audience, I've come here and I have said that in my speech today. But I also say it in my speeches to the CBI and to the British Chamber of Commerce. I come here and talk about the importance of business and how we need to partner with business, and I talk to business about how we need to partner and work with trade unions, which is fundamentally important. If I just came here and said it and didn't say it there, you wouldn't believe I meant it. So I am absolutely giving you that assurance.

In terms of how we bring this about, I think the point you make about public procurement and contracts is really important. It is not a free-for-all. There's a lot of public money tied up in public procurement, and an incoming Labour Government is entitled to say that it comes with terms and conditions. There is a framework for public procurement, at the heart of which is dignity and respect, and we expect to see unionised jobs and support unionised businesses. Garfield, if we continue to work together on this, your campaign must go on, but it gives us that chance. It is another example – I will keep coming back to this -- because it will be my central focus. We have been in opposition for 13 years, Garfield; 13 years! If we win the election – this is why I am so single-mindedly focused on it – we get the chance then to bring about the changes that you and others are campaigning for. So thank you for what you are doing and thank you for what you are continuing to do. I will work with you for it. If we get a Labour Government, and I hope that we will, then we can be in a position to do something about this. Thank you, Garfield, very, very much. *(Applause)*

TAM WILSON (GMB Scotland): Oil and gas are fundamental foundations of the Scottish economy which she holds from Kirkcaldy to Cambridge. Labour's position on blocking new licences is a threat to Scottish jobs and the UK energy security. Without new licences we will be relying on imports

from other countries, who will reap the benefits of the jobs and taxes. The SNP are the people who promised a green jobs revolution, but far from being a great place of work, Scotland has become a desert. We need oil and gas jobs, so when the current fields in the North Sea are depleted and Scotland's oil and gas jobs evaporate, what will you tell our members working in these sectors, which will be decimated?

SIR KEIR STARMER: Tam, thank you so much for raising that question. I absolutely share your concern about future jobs. I absolutely share that concern. I do know that you and others, and working people across the country, have been let down by the Tories and let down by the SNP on promises about jobs that never materialised. I want to be absolutely clear. Oil and gas are going to be part of the mix for decades to come, into the 2050s. I don't think that part of our argument is heard loud enough and clearly enough. For decades to come, oil and gas will be part of the mix. But at the heart of your question, Tam, is this crucial issue: what happens next? What I will never let happen is a repeat of what happened in coalmining, where an industry came to an end and nobody had planned for the future, yet we are still living with the consequences. We cannot allow that to happen.

I think there is an opportunity now to seize the next generation of jobs in nuclear, in new nuclear and in renewables across the country. There is a race on at the moment. Look at the Inflation Reduction Act in America. Look at the EU's response. There is a race on for the next generation of jobs and we need to be in that race. The wind turbines in Whitelee were not built in Britain because we did not get ahead of the game. We cannot let that happen again. So we have to seize that opportunity to get those jobs in renewables. I have estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of future jobs to be had – 50,000 jobs in Scotland – and we can use and deploy the skills that we have. We can make sure through GB Energy and through procurement that those jobs are in the places that need them because we don't want to repeat the error of saying "You've got to move. You've got to go. We don't need to come to your community. We can let you wither". We will never repeat that.

If we don't seize that opportunity, if we just sit back and wait without acting now on our Green Prosperity Plan, then I genuinely think that future generations will never forgive us for repeating the mistake that was made when the coalmines were closed down. Tam, we will work with you on that. Thank you for raising it as it is such an important issue. *(Applause)*



The last question is to come from Joshua.

JOSHUA BOYLE: I am from Southern Region. I work at Asda at Brighton Marina, which is just down the road. They have recently announced that they are cutting the pay of seven thousand colleagues across the South East of England. This amounts to a pay cut of 60 pence an hour for a group of workers who kept us fed throughout the pandemic. Not only are Asda threatening to cut pay, but anybody who does not accept will face the nefarious practice of fire-and-rehire. As you know, we are the union of British Gas workers, so we have seen this disgrace before. What is your message to Asda?

SIR KEIR STARMER: Joshua, firstly, let me acknowledge the GMB campaign on this. It's a really important campaign. *(Applause)* It's a hugely important campaign, and with it the campaign in relation to British Gas as well, which GMB led from the front. The answer to your question, so far as I am concerned, is very clear. We will ban fire-and-rehire. It's as simple as that. It just needs to be done. *(Applause)*

I will just elaborate for Joshua. If there is one thing that comes through everything I have said here, this will be a repeat of it, I am afraid. We've pushed the Government. We've pushed amendments. We voted against the Government on this. We've urged them to bring this in. They say it's the wrong thing but they don't do anything about it. So we are going to be stuck with it unless and until we win an election. If we win that election, we will ban it. That's my frustration with opposition. I can stand there in Parliament on the Opposition Benches saying, "Fire-and-rehire is wrong", we can vote against it but we are not changing it on your behalf or on behalf of working people across the country. This Government are not going to budge on it. They know what they are doing. They are not suddenly going to have a change of heart, so we have to go on, make the argument, win the election, work with you and ban it, and that's what we will do. Thank you so much, Joshua. Thank you, Congress, for having me and inviting me. Thank you so much. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Keir, thank you, and thank you for calling for Amazon to recognise the GMB. *(Applause)* We heard yesterday from our General Secretary just how important it is for our members that we have a Labour Government. Thank you for coming to address Congress. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now go back to the motions. I call for the movers of Motions 243, 244 and 245 to come to the front of the hall.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: HOUSING**

### **HOUSING MOTION MOTION 243**

#### **243. HOUSING MOTION**

This Congress warmly welcomes the decision by the new Wandsworth Labour administration in 2022 not to fund 1,000 new social homes to be built in the borough with the proceeds from the sale of public land or new homes in new developments. Instead, the new Labour administration is taking full advantage of the new facilities allowed by Government to raise long term loans to fund these public assets.

GMB Congress consider that this decision sets out a clear route for the building and funding of new council homes by the new Labour administration in Wandsworth and is a welcome clean break with the policies and practice on social housing used since the 1980s.

There has been a planned run down in the stock of public housing available at genuinely affordable rents for lower paid workers. Over the last 10 years this has been followed by the widespread sale of the public freehold land on which the council estates sit and demolition of the remaining badly needed council homes. At best this has resulted in mixed developments with little gain in the numbers of social homes, at worst the number of council houses has fallen.

These policies have been a disaster for lower paid workers, who need access to homes at genuinely affordable rents. Amongst the rubble of these demolitions lie the hopes and dreams of countless residents who simply need decent homes at genuinely affordable rents. The only real solution to a shortage of homes to let at genuinely affordable rents is to build more homes to let at genuinely affordable rents!

GMB Congress consider that a new Labour administration in Wandsworth now have an expansive policy to provide the funds it needs to build more council homes in the borough without selling its own land. GMB Richmond & Wandsworth consider that a new incoming Labour Government should build on this clean break with existing failed housing policy.

#### **L26 RICHMOND & WANDSWORTH BRANCH**

Southern Region

*(Carried)*

CATHY KETTEL (Southern): Congress and Vice President, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I move Motion 243 – Housing Motion. This motion originated in my branch of the GMB, Richmond and Wandsworth. Wandsworth Borough incorporates some of the most deprived and some of the most affluent areas in the country. Under the previous Tory council, huge amounts of luxury flats went up. Many of you will have seen these ostentatious developments, including the Sky Pool, which is a glass-bottomed swimming pool connecting two luxury properties opposite the American Embassy. The complex cost £1.6 billion to

build and the pool alone costs £326,000 a year to heat. So once-vibrant communities with a lot of social cohesion are now faceless blocks of flats, often left empty and owned by overseas investors.

Contrast this with people living on a local estate, who are forced to visit a community centre to access the warm hub, which ran through the winter, allowing them to have three meals a day, use the wi-fi and keep warm. GMB members in these boroughs are often carrying out low-paid work, for example, refuse and parking services, estate cleaners and school-support staff.

As wages have stagnated and housing costs have soared, many have left the borough to seek more affordable accommodation. During the previous Tory administrations in Wandsworth, they delivered practically no affordable housing and definitely no social housing. The new Labour administration that took control in Wandsworth in May 2022 has, thankfully, started to reverse this trend. They have committed to a thousand new social homes in the borough by taking advantage of the new facility from central Government to fund these public assets by allowing long-term loans. We need now to call on other Labour councils and a future Labour Government to provide the funds it needs to build more council homes without selling off its own land. Investment in new council homes is the only way to protect workers from unscrupulous landlords in the private sector and over-crowded living conditions.

Working people, no matter what job they do, deserve to be able to live near where they work. Decent housing is a fundamental right which should be accessible to all. Thank you. Solidarity, comrades. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. Secunder?

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): Congress and Vice President, I am seconding Motion 243. As a resident in the Borough of Wandsworth, I've seen the growth of these tower blocks and skyscrapers as well as that swimming pool monstrosity. It has caused a massive divide because what they don't mention is the fact that people have to go through separate entrances to get into the building. You can have a shared-house property or you can be a private tenant. If you are either/or, you have to go into separate doors to access the building and your home.

We have seen this situation arising. The council is building a thousand new homes. They have started to do so but, because of the mass influx of the

skyscrapers, it just looks like a concrete jungle, and it's not a pretty site. It's not nice. Let's hope that the Labour council does keep to their word and stick to their promises. It's good to see the new Labour-led council staying committed to this policy of providing new homes since coming back into power in 2022, and Wandsworth is committed to making it easier to move into different types of property as their housing needs change. I hope to see this promise kept. It is no good having skyscrapers that create a them-and-us divide, making people use separate entrances to enter the same building. Keep housing genuinely affordable to the ordinary workers in the borough. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call the mover of Motion 244.

## **PROTECTION FOR TENANTS FROM SLUM LANDLORDS MOTION 244**

### **244. PROTECTION FOR TENANTS FROM SLUM LANDLORDS.**

This Congress is alarmed by the fragile position of tenants as financial pressures on both landlords and tenants mount;

This Congress notes that, including due to higher mortgage interest rates, buy to let has become less profitable;

This Congress observes that following Brexit and Covid, sourcing building materials and skilled trades people is more challenging;

This Congress receives more frequent reports of unscrupulous landlords cutting corners, with necessary repairs put off or bodged;

This Congress is especially concerned about housing that is allowed to fall into a state that is hazardous to health;

This Congress accepts that given tight supply and fierce competition for rental properties, tenants cannot meaningfully assess in a single viewing the condition of a property they wish to rent;

This Congress deplores dishonest landlords obfuscating the condition of their property and stringing tenants along as to the necessity and timing of repairs;

This Congress considers that as with EPC energy and environmental efficiency statements, landlords should be required to declare any property related health hazards emerging over the previous 12 months, and that effective remedial steps have been certified as having been taken;

This Congress assesses that knowing whether a property has recently had outbreaks of vermin, cockroaches or mould will enable prospective tenants to better value properties and to hold landlords to account; and

This Congress calls on the Executive to lobby our Parliamentary Group to consider the possibility of such a new legal duty on landlords to disclose property related health hazards.

## **E35 BRANCH**

Wales & South West Region

*(Carried)*

PETER YOUNG (Wales & South West): Congress and Vice President, I'm a first-time speaker and a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 244 – Protection for Tenants from Slum Landlords.

We are stuck in a housing crisis where mortgages are difficult to save for and to obtain, as well as house prices spiralling out of control. This is compounded by the Bank of England and its radical inflation-fighting plan of increasing interest rates, leading to people being forced to sell or, at worst, repossessed and being forced into the rental market. We are 'Generation Rent', the generation where the rental market is like the Wild West, the generation where rents are topping in excess of £1,000 plus a month. As a branch we are concerned about the worsening position of our numerous members who rent, and are forced to rent for much longer than our parents ever did.

The UK is plagued by amateur landlords who are buying properties, mostly as an investment, and with uncertainty in the pension market people are looking at bricks and mortar as their pension pots. This leads to landlords who do not have any training or the capital behind them for when issues do arise and need fixing.

Landlords are facing higher costs for repair work, higher interest rates and higher taxes on profits. We speak with members who are stuck in housing that is not only of low quality but in an unhealthy and unsanitary condition. Mold, damp and pests are all now regular occurrences. It is unacceptable that landlords can churn a succession of tenants through the same unsafe property year after year, and routinely do so without any come back.

The environmental health departments have seen their funding slashed and, as a result, they cannot cope with the volumes of referrals and enforcements. That is even if tenants, who might be on a short-term contract, are brave enough to take on the wealthy landlords and be confident of avoiding being blacklisted by letting agents. Tenants know that they can face reprisals from seeking the involvement of local environmental health officers. Data shows that tenants who complain are usually pushed out of their homes in a matter of months. Many of the landlords own a portfolio of slum dwellings and are ready and willing to play rough to protect their cash cows.

We want there to be a requirement for landlords to disclose to potential new tenants if there have been any major defects in their property which have recently been reported by outgoing tenants. We want them to certify that the necessary remedial steps have been or are being taken and when. New tenants have a right to know if the property is prone to damp and pests. Many properties change hands in the summer months when issues such as damp are not obvious. Landlords should not be allowed to continue to indefinitely lie and conceal the truth about these properties. Landlords should feel greater pressure to offer and maintain their properties to an acceptable standard.

We, therefore, propose the introduction of a mandatory statement along the lines of the successful EPC energy and environmental ratings that landlords are used to. This will enable them to understand at a glance what they may be exposing themselves and their families to. We already require electrical and gas certifications. It is not much of an extension to expect landlords to certify the position of other hazards. We ask the Central Executive to use their influential position to support the incoming Labour administration for such action. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Peter. Secunder?

MARK BOWLER (Wales & South West): Congress, I second Motion 244. A Bible quote from Ecclesiastes indicates that there is nothing new under the Sun. When it comes to unscrupulous landlords, that is certainly true. Such has been the case since the mass migration from the fields to the new towns of the industrial revolution.

It is everyone's aspiration to have a safe, dry and healthy space to call home. We spend upwards of a third of our income on such. Therefore, it should be an absolute given that homes are fit for purpose, and if unscrupulous landlords will not step up to their responsibilities voluntarily, then we must make them. That is why I am happy to second this motion. It is an absolute scandal that in this day and in this country people are being left in appalling slum conditions. Please support this motion, and let's put an end to poor, inadequate and unhealthy social and private housing. We do not want to see any more slum, damp, condensation-riddled homes and/or homes infested with vermin. We do not want any sub-standard homes that make people ill and no more easy and big profits for landlords at the cost of vulnerable tenants. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. I call the mover of Motion 245.

**ELECTORAL REFORM SERVICES SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED WITH UNFAIR  
BALLOTS ON SOCIAL HOUSING ESTATES DEMOLITION  
MOTION 245**

**245. ELECTORAL REFORM SERVICES SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED WITH UNFAIR BALLOTS ON  
SOCIALHOUSING ESTATES DEMOLITION**

This Congress is very concerned that Civica - formerly Electoral Reform Balloting Services and used by unions for internal elections and industrial action ballots, is now involved in estate ballots for residents on estates facing demolition where the ground rules for the ballot are unfair and completely lacking in safeguards to stop unfair interference in the balloting process. Congress has very clear policies to support residents on estates facing demolition and has called for the Labour Party and elected councillors and mayors to establish fair rules for ballots for residents to vote on plans for the future of their homes. Congress has welcomed the introduction of ballots by the Mayor of London but called for loopholes to be closed and fair rules to be made mandatory. However, on the ground experience has demonstrated the lack of such fair rules in practice. It has also seen second ballots following in a very short period overwhelming votes by residents to reject demolition. In these ballots the promoters of demolition have been able to interfere in the balloting process with incentives for a yes vote. There has also been a complete lack of information about what the regeneration means for residents and a one-sided process of expert advice to the residents. Some residents have been excluded from the ballot-according to the promoters of demolition on the advice of Civica. The involvement of the Electoral Reform Services and its subsidiary Civica in such unfair ballots is unworthy of them. Congress calls on the Board of the Electoral Reform Services to engage with residents on estates facing demolition and with them and councils and housing associations draw up ground rules for fair ballots and safeguards to stop unfair interference in these ballots. Congress calls for the Electoral Reform Society to insist that councils and Housing Associations should follow these rules and where Civica is conducting the ballot it should enforce them. Congress calls on The Electoral Reform Services to boycott ballots where ballot promoters do not follow the rules. They should also refuse to get involved in second ballots to overturn the first ballot against demolition as they should have done in an estate threatened with demolition in Camden in the Autumn 2022.

**135 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH**

London Region

*(Referred)*

DENNIS RISVEGLI (London): Congress, I move Motion 245 on housing. Our motion points out that ERS and Civica, which are well established to run industrial ballots, are also now involved in the estate-ballot process, and we have identified some serious issues that need to be addressed.

GMB policy is to protect the rights of residents on council and housing estates facing demolition, but instead many are faced with practices that undermine and discredit the estate-balloting process. One housing association used in the guidelines for a second ballot for demolition for the residents of the Juniper estate in Camden. The first ballot in 2020 saw residents overwhelmingly reject demolition. GMB's calls were not heeded.

The second ballot was held and now GMB members on the estate are facing demolition of their homes. For any fair ballot process, whether it is industrial or housing, all parties involved need to agree and follow established rules and safeguards. It is no different for housing. ERS and Civica should not conduct ballots where their sponsors are not prepared to play fair and follow agreed rules.

First, ERS and Civica need to engage with all affected resident groups and with ballot sponsors to draw up ground rules and safeguards for fair ballots. Then ERS and Civica need to ensure that ballot sponsors agree to strictly follow these rules and where Civica conducts the ballot for it to enforce them. ERS and Civica should be using their good name and massive expertise and experience to help resident groups and ballot sponsors to ensure that fair process, fair rules and safeguards are followed in estate ballots and be bold enough to stop any ballot not being run fairly.

GMB has had a policy on this matter since 2015, and we have had numerous meetings with the Mayor of London asking him to close the loopholes being exploited by ballot sponsors. We welcome the chance to debate this motion as it will strengthen our policy and make ERS and Civica aware of our concerns about the problems with the ballot process. This motion will also help GMB members on these estates facing demolition of their homes and resident groups in their discussion with ERS, Civica and ballot sponsors to agree to adhere to fair rules and processes. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dennis. Seconder? *(The motion was formally seconded from the floor)* I call Sue Walker to respond on behalf of the CEC.

SUE WALKER (CEC): Vice President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 244 and 245. The CEC is supporting Motion 244: Protection for Tenants from Slum Landlords, with a qualification. We do have a long-standing existing policy on landlords needing to provide a minimum standard of homes they rent, but our qualification is that whilst we support the principle of this requirement of landlords, we are not in a position to be experts in what should be required.

On Motion 245, Electoral Reform Services should not be involved with unfair ballots on social housing estates' demolition. The CEC is asking for this motion to be referred. The CEC is deeply sympathetic to the prospect of our members losing their homes through a process that the community



has deemed flawed. According to a h a process that the community has deemed flawed. According to a *New Statesman* article in March 2023, the Juniper Estate ballot is the only ballot on estate demolition in London which first returned a “no” vote. Through further correspondence with the branch, campaigning is on-going and they have been in talks with the Mayor of London. The CEC is asking that this motion be referred so that more information can be gathered on the role that Civica has played in the ballot, but also seek alternative campaigning within the local authority and engage in further talks with the Mayor of London. Thank you, Congress.  
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue. Colleagues, Motion 243 is being supported. All those in favour, please show? Any against. That is carried. Does Wales & South West agree with the qualification to Motion 244. The qualification has been accepted. All those in favour, please show? Any against? That is carried. Does London accept reference back for Motion 245? (Agreed) In that case, we don't need a vote on that motion.

*Motion 243 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 244 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 245 was REFERRED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, I call on the mover of Motion 94 to come to the rostrum. Can the seconder and the speakers for Motion 95 please make themselves ready?

## **LONE WORKING POLICY**

### **MOTION 94**

#### **94. LONE WORKING POLICY**

This Congress believes that since the pandemic Lone working has become even more prevalent with more people working from home and less in offices. Lone working is not just categorised to this group of people but to anyone who works without close or direct supervision which includes contactors and the self-employed.

Whilst lone workers are covered by existing Health & Safety legislation, as it stands there is no legal requirement for companies to have a Lone Working policy.

This congress calls upon the GMB to lobby the government to make it law that every employer should have a lone working policy thus protecting their most exposed employees.

### **SOUTH WALES POLICE STAFF BRANCH (S62)**

Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

PHILIP ROGERS (Wales & South West): Congress, I move Motion 94 – Lone Working Policy. Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, including contractors, the self-employed and employees who work outside of normal hours. Mobile workers, who work away from their fixed base, also come under the lone-working umbrella.

Evidence suggests that since the pandemic lone working has become even more prevalent with the move from office-based workplaces to working from home. There is no specific law dealing with lone working. The Health & Safety At Work Act 1974 places general duties of employers and employees to look at lone workers equally. The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to make suitable and sufficient assessments of risks, but there is no law requiring them to draft a specific lone-working policy. Lone workers are more vulnerable because of the lack of near-by support. Being secluded from managers and colleagues, it can cause work-related stress and impact their mental health. Workers may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. It also makes it harder for them to prevent an accident. Procedures should be put in place and lone workers should be trained in how to use them in first-aid and emergency situations.

By creating a lone-working policy, this can help employers explain the process to staff and should cover all types of lone working across the organisation. Roles should be assessed giving clear information for limitations of lone working whilst considering employee needs. It should be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains fit for purpose for everyone. A lone-working policy should treat staff fairly, equally and not disadvantage anyone. Wherever an employee is working, they will be given the same support, including access to their recognised trade union as well as opportunities for training, development and promotion. An employee should not miss out on anything because of where they work. The policy should explain how lone working is addressed within the workplace, outline how things work and set limits, but must allow flexibility.

This Congress calls upon the GMB to lobby the Government to make it law that every employer should have a lone-working policy to protect their most exposed employees. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Philip. Secunder?

ANDY MILLS (Wales & South West): Congress and Vice President, I second Motion 94. As it stands, there is no legal requirement for workplaces to

have a lone-working policy, or even risk assessments for lone workers. This cannot be right, because protecting our most vulnerable and exposed workers should be an employer's utmost priority. Management needs to think about who will be involved and what hazards could harm those working alone, including violence within the workplace and the workplace itself, particularly if it is a rural or isolated location. I have seen quite a bit of this this year through people who work in my workplace. Employers must manage any risk before people work alone because there is likely to be a greater risk for lone workers. It is harder for lone workers to get help so they require extra training to understand any risks in their work and how to control them.

A lone-working policy would put down clear guidelines for uncertain situations, enabling employees to cope with the unexpected. It would also keep all relevant information and guidance within one place for easy access. It will prompt people to think about other practical issues, health and safety implications and clear steps to follow. All these things could be covered within a lone-working policy. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. I call the mover of Motion 95.

## **THE SUN IS OUT MOTION 95**

### **95. THE SUN IS OUT**

This Congress proposes a motion that strengthens the protection of our members who are outdoor workers. We have a vast number of members who work outside for long periods of time and there is no maximum temperature that members can be required to work in. We propose this motion to push employers to regularly refer outdoor workers for skin checks on a yearly basis to ensure that any early stages of skin conditions due to the exposure of the sun are investigated and diagnosed early to ensure immediate treatment is provided which ultimately could save lives.

### **L16 GREENWICH BRANCH**

Southern Region

*(Carried)*

EARL JACKSON (Southern): Vice President and Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a second-time speaker, but I'm prepared today. *(Applause)* This is my first Congress, but I was looking forward to this event because I have heard so much about it, and I must say that I have enjoyed the few days that I have been here so far, so hopefully the rest of the days will go well.

Since joining the GMB my work/life experience has taken a completely new and fulfilling direction; first, as a workplace rep and then as a health and safety officer, which I have enjoyed immensely. That brings me to my motion. It has been an eye-opener to the on-going injustices which our members continually cope with on a daily basis and the uncaring nature that employers can have towards those who contribute to their business.

My motion regards outdoor workers; for example, road sweepers, street enforcement officers, labourers, scaffolders and so on, who are constantly working in the elements on a daily basis. As we know, climate change is a major factor in the weather we have had and, in recent summers, as last summer, we reached temperatures of at least 40 degrees, which was warmer than the Mediterranean. Have a staycation, don't go away, don't go abroad. You can have a nice holiday at home. As these things are, we know that there are times, as pleasant as it may be, that sometimes the constant exposure to these conditions can have adverse effects on health. We can give prime examples of UV damage to ageing of the skin. Sun poisoning, which is something I have just learnt about, has flu-like symptoms, such as headache, fever and chills and sensitive painful skin to the touch. Last but not least is the dreaded skin cancer, which can go undetected if you don't know what you are looking for.

With these examples in mind, we propose that employers should have in place a monitoring system for employees to have regular medical checks for said conditions, which should occur annually. We can lobby employers in the strongest terms to look at ways to ensure safe working conditions are in place, and with direct campaigning we could see such practices made lawful. No employee wants to come to a place of work to find that they have developed a medical condition when trying to earn a living. I repeat "earn a living", but instead a possible death sentence. It may be a little drastic but possible, none the less. So I put to you that no business is a good business without good workers to do the business. Thank you.  
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Earl. I call the seconder for Motion 95.

ALI HAYDOR (Southern): Vice President and Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (Applause) I am seconding Motion 95 – The Sun is Out.

Well, Congress, the Sun is definitely out, so let's put the heat of the Sun on the employers so they have the energy to do the right thing and protect

workers, what with global warming causing extreme and unpredictable temperatures, which in turn are creating unsafe workplaces for our members. So many are working in dangerous heat, putting their health at risk. We should never have workers dying due to poor working conditions. Never! Yet employers are running away from their duty of care to keep workers safe. They can run but they can't hide. It's time for employers to take ownership and responsibility by putting workers first over profit. They must provide a safe workplace. Let's protect our members with regular skin checks and immediate treatments so lives can be saved and make work better in the Sun. Please support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ali. Colleagues, both of these motions are being supported. So we will go to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 94, please show? Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 95, please show? Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 94 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 95 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Just before we go to the next set of motions, we are moving Motions 238, 239, 240 and 242 to the afternoon session. We will also debate Motion 229, which was brought back onto the agenda with those motions this afternoon. These motions will be debated after the awards. Thank you.

I call the mover of Motion 227. *(No response)* Do we have a mover from London Region for Motion 227? *(No response)* It's going to fall if no one speaks on it. You can formally move it. *(The motion was formally moved and formally seconded)*

## **RAPIDLY INCREASING ENERGY BILLS**

### **MOTION 227**

#### **227. RAPIDLY INCREASING ENERGY BILLS**

Congress notes with concern the ever-increasing changes in the Conservative Government's Policy towards the rapidly rising Energy Prices.

Congress further notes that whilst there are policies in place to reduce bills until April 2023, the proposals to protect from that date are under threat.

The current costs of living crisis is already having a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable in our society. It is also making more people fall on the wrong side of the poverty line. There is a rise in people using foodbanks, applying for other grants and loans.

The energy crisis is a large part of our cost-of-living crisis and potential winter power cuts threaten not just an increased pressure on the NHS but on other public services too.

We call upon Congress to:

1. As far as is practicable and possible to work with branches to raise awareness of the impact of cost-of-living crisis on members, particularly those in the equality strands who are statistically more likely to be hardest hit. This should also include signposting members to organisations who can offer further support.
2. To work with members and Regional Equality officers to establish a concerted campaign to ensure that there are Government policies put in place to prevent our most vulnerable in society suffering more from the energy crisis.

## **E10 EALING BRANCH**

**London Region**

*(Carried)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call the mover for Composite 16.

## **ENERGY – PRE-PAYMENT METERS JUSTICE**

### **COMPOSITE 16**

***Covering Motions 230, 231 and 232***

***Motion 230 – Pre-Payment Meter Justice – North West & Irish.***

***Motion 231 – Prepayment Meters – London.***

***Motion 232 – Pre-Payment Meters – Midlands.***

## **ENERGY - PRE-PAYMENT METERS JUSTICE**

This Congress registers deep concern at the dramatic increase in energy suppliers moving people on to pre-payment meters. Between October and December 2022, 60,000 people were transferred. Pre-payment meters charge for energy at a higher rate than contracts where the customer pays monthly or by direct debit.

Over 370,000 Court Warrants were issued in the last year to force people to have a pre-payment or smart meter installed in their homes. Those on smart meters already can be changed over to a pre-payment meter remotely by the energy company.

Congress notes that there has been a call to ban energy companies forcing customers, many who are our members, onto prepayment meters because they are struggling to pay bills.

Congress further notes In the last year, that Citizens Advice Bureau estimate that 3.2 million people in Britain were disconnected from their gas and/or electricity energy supply due to running out of credit on their prepayment meter, which is the equivalent of one every 10 seconds.

Pre-payment meters are more costly, and the supplier takes a proportion of every payment to pay off their customers debt. This can, and does, add to the problems facing those already struggling to make ends meet.

For many, running out of credit is not a oneoff event. More than 2 million people are being disconnected at least once a month. A fifth of those on pre-pay report going without heat or light for at least 24 hours,

unable to cook or wash. To get connected you have to pay a standing charge before you have any energy.

Those who use prepayment meters pay for their gas and electric by topping up their meter either through accounts or adding credit to a card in a local shop or post office.

This is expensive.

The tariffs set by the energy companies on prepayment meters are far too high and difficulties occur when those on prepayment meters no longer have any credit left on the meter and have no money to top it up- leaving many unable to cook or heat their homes. This is problematic when the local shop or post office is closed.

Pre-payment meters are unjust and lead to the poorest in our society paying the most for energy. This is a poverty trap.

Disconnections are unacceptable and a stain on our society.

Congress believes that;

It is wrong for private companies to enjoy, profit from and abuse public sector laws that they have inherited since privatisation to pursue unprecedented numbers of disconnections.

With the cost-of-living crisis under this Tory Government the prices of the energy companies tariffs are sky high.

Many who work, which include our members, are often faced with this situation which impacts their health wellbeing and mental health. We know that despite working, people are still struggling to pay for basic needs like food, gas, and electric and maintain a roof over their heads.

We urge Ofgem and the Government to hold the energy companies to account for their actions and to ensure there is a fairer way for those in difficulty to pay their bills without having additional penalties added in terms of higher fees. Sadly, thousands are already struggling to heat their homes and it is proven this has a medical impact on people and children. Already there are excess deaths recorded due to people not heating their homes.

We have seen significant profits taken by shareholders from Utility Companies over many years whilst their customers have to choose between heat or food, this cannot be just or right in a modern economy.

Congress is called upon to:

1. Highlight the issue of prepayment meters through bulletins, leaflets, communications or providing signposting to organisations who can help.
2. Consider working alongside decision makers, appropriate stakeholders, GMB backed MP's and legislatures to ban prepayment meters.
3. Campaign for the government to immediately outlaw the use of pre-payment meters and disconnection for reasons of inability to pay.
4. Introduce a standard rate for energy for all, rather than the current system, which penalises those least able to pay.

Congress, this impacts our members. This impacts on the poor, disabled, elderly and many working people. The energy market needs tight regulation with justice at its heart. We call on GMB to campaign

with partners for action on pre-payment meters and to continue to hold the energy companies to account for their actions or lack of them.

**MOVING REGION: NORTH WEST & IRISH**  
**SECONDING REGION: LONDON OTHER REGION: MIDLANDS**

*(Carried)*

TOM WILLIAMS (North West & Irish): Congress and President, I'm a first-time delegate and speaker, moving Composite 16. This winter too many people were forced to go without lighting and heating because they couldn't afford to put money on the meter. Families with young children were spending Christmas in the cold and dark. The Tory cost-of-living crisis has impacted us all, but for people on pre-payment meters the cost-of-living crisis was immediate and acute. They were exposed directly to the hikes in retail energy prices with disgracefully inflated standing charges. They were offered a voucher scheme riddled with problems and with millions still left unclaimed.

People with pre-payment meters are often on low incomes, living from payday to payday. They may be reliant on frozen local housing allowances that don't reflect the cost of living in their area. They may live in private rental accommodation with exploitative landlords. Many are amongst some of the most vulnerable in our society, but pre-payment meters are part of the so-called "poverty premium". It's a perverse fact that being poor costs more! This, rightly, caused a national outcry this past winter. Ofgem and the utility companies agreed to spend or force the installations of pre-payment meters. Temporarily there would be no contractors working for utility companies forcing their way into people's homes under warrant. Temporarily, your electricity company wouldn't be able to turn your smart meter into a pre-payment meter at the push of a button without your permission. Did you know they can do that? Well, they can, and forced installations are back. The energy companies promised us that there is a new code of conduct but the code is weak and, frankly, do we trust our privatised, profit-driven utility companies to stick to a voluntary code? Congress, I don't.

The utility companies say they have a duty to stop people running up mountains of debt but breaking into a vulnerable person's home does not protect them from debt. Does it help someone to manage their debt to make them pay more and to make them pay it up front or else they will freeze? No! This motion calls on GMB to work with stakeholders and our sponsored Members of Parliament to find an alternative to pre-payment



meters and to stop forced installations and disconnections. We must end this poverty premium scandal. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, well done. I call the seconder from London Region.

ROSEMARY COOPER (Midlands): Good morning, President and Congress. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I'm seconding Composite 16.

Energy – Pre-Payment Meters Justice. This Congress notes that 3.6 million have had their gas or electricity cut off in 2022. Others have run out of credit on their pre-payment meters. Pre-payment meters charge for energy at a higher rate that comes into being when the customer pays monthly or by direct debit. For many, running out of credit is not a one-off event. More than two million people are being disconnected at least once a month. A fifth of those on pre-pay report are going without heat or light for at least 24 hours, unable to cook or wash. To get connected you have to pay a standing charge before you have any energy.

Congress believes that pre-payment meters are unjust and lead to the poorest in our society paying the most for energy. This is a poverty trap.

It is wrong for private companies to enjoy, profit from and abuse public sector laws that they have inherited since privatisation. Please support Unite today. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Rosemary. I love the colours in your hair.

CATHY HOLLAND (London): Congress, I also second or third. Pre-payment meters are an awful way of getting the maximum amount of money from people who genuinely cannot afford it, although I do appreciate that there may be those who choose this method of controlling their bills, but to be forced to have one is completely out of order. While energy companies are making huge profits, why not put some back in and lower the bills for those who need it most. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. I call the mover of Motion 234, please.

## **LABOUR LEADER SHOULD CHANGE HIS STANCE ON NEW NORTH SEA OIL AND GAS FIELDS MOTION 234**

### **234. LABOUR LEADER SHOULD CHANGE HIS STANCE ON NEW NORTH SEA OIL AND GAS FIELDS**

Congress is very concerned that an incoming Labour Government led by Sir Keir Starmer will ban investment in new oil and gas fields in the North Sea in addition to refusing to allow onshore shale gas extraction.

Sir Keir Starmer speaking at Davos in Switzerland in January 2023 is quoted as follows: **“What we’ve said about oil and gas is that there does need to be a transition. Obviously, it will play its part during that transition but not new investment, not new fields up in the North Sea, because we need to go towards Net Zero, we need to ensure that renewable energy is where we go next.”**

This stance if it is not changed will be very damaging for both household energy bills and for UK energy security. It will mean that Britain will have to rely on supplies from regimes run by **“henchmen, hangmen and head choppers”** as our General Secretary so memorably put it some years ago.

Congress calls on the CEC to vigorously oppose this policy and seek to get it changed before the election.

The arguments in favour of the UK having its own gas supplies are overwhelming. Renewables are intermittent. The plain fact is that without gas to generate electricity there will be power cuts on the one day in six that there is no wind. During last winter there were long periods when two thirds of UK electricity consumption was from gas. There is as yet no viable alternative energy sources available at scale on the basis of current technology to generate electricity at reasonable prices.

New nuclear power stations are years away due to foot dragging. There is as yet no economically viable technology developed at scale to store renewables energy. Gas will be needed for electricity generation and for home heating for years to come until realistic, reliable, and affordable technologies are available.

Oil and gas fields have a lifespan of up to 20 years. Over such a timescale the UK government is faced with a straightforward choice- either develop our own supplies or leave UK industry and consumers to the mercy of the international markets. Labour should see sense on this.

### **A37 AVIATION SECURITY BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

PHIL SHARKEY (London): Congress, I move Motion 234 on North Sea oil and gas fields. In Washington on 24<sup>th</sup> May Rachel Reeves spoke in favour of adopting a new approach, which I call “securonomics”. It focuses on the economic security of a nation, prioritising economic strength and resilience. She went on to praise the Biden Administration, building America’s economic security, strength and resilience. A more active State is pursuing a modern industrial strategy is selecting the areas where America must guarantee its ability to produce what America needs, whether it is in

digital technology, clean energy and industries for the Inflation Reduction Act. Rachel commented that under Labour Britain will embrace securonomics. It will mean becoming a better version of Britain by building on existing strengths of our economy, our enterprise in energy and life science. By strengthening our economy, we must become more resilient.

Rebuilding the industry foundations that we have lost, and which has left us exposed to global shocks, we have to invest in the industries and technologies that will determine our future economic success and building financial security that each and every household in Britain needs.

Congress, we undoubtedly warmly welcome this new approach set out by Rachel. A vital component of our energy supply lies offshore in the North Sea. Yet a mere four days later, the *Sunday Times* splashed with a front-page headline that Keir Starmer would commit to Labour banning new offshore oil and gas projects. This is on top of the ban of using the massive gas reserves onshore in Britain. So much for Labour taking a leaf from the Biden Administration's book. This spring Biden gave the go-ahead to drill for oil in 73 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico and for a huge wind project in Alaska. As a candidate, Biden promised to move the United States away from fossil fuels, but that was before the war in Ukraine. Turning our backs on our own supplies of oil and gas is in exact opposition of securonomics – security and resilience – that Rachel promised in Washington. The Biden Administration has recognised this and U-turned. So, too, should Labour. Even the SNP has now stopped short for calling a ban in the Ross field in the north Atlantic.

Congress calls on the CEC to seek to get the Starmer stance changed before the election, as the arguments in favour of the UK to have its own gas supplies are overwhelming. During last winter there were long periods where two-thirds of UK electricity consumption was from gas. Gas will be needed for electrical generation and for home heating for years to come until an affordable and reliable set of technologies are available to do the job. Labour should recognise that this is not only an electrically-viable route to achieving a net zero-carbon emissions economy. Any UK Government – Labour or Tory – is faced with a sensible choice: either develop our own supplies of oil and gas or leave UK industry and consumers to the mercy of the international markets. Labour should see the sense of this. Stopping new oil and gas projects reduces Labour's electoral chances in the north-east of Scotland, and is vulnerable to changes that will leave the UK exposed to relying on supply from regime

run by henchmen, hangman and head choppers. There is a very high risk that this approach will be rejected by the electoral. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call the seconder. *(Formally seconded from the floor)* I now call a mover for Motion 237.

**AVERTING WATER SHORTAGES DURING SEVERE DROUGHTS IN LONDON AND THE SOUTHEAST**  
**MOTION 237**

**237. AVERTING WATER SHORTAGES DURING SEVERE DROUGHTS IN LONDON AND THE SOUTHEAST**

Congress has recognised that once in a lifetime severe summer droughts like that which happened in 1976 are inevitable in Britain. Indeed, due to climate change such droughts may occur more often.

Congress has also recognised that under current water storage and supply arrangements that there are no back up arrangements in place to top up reservoirs in London, the South East and East of England to avert severe water shortages during another drought like 1976.

Congress has also noted that a scheme developed by Victorian water engineers to avert severe water shortages in these areas in times of severe droughts has yet to be implemented.

In essence this involves moving water from the west of Britain to the areas vulnerable to severe water shortages. Failure to act on such a scheme has happened under both Labour and Conservative Governments.

Congress notes that the input from GMB nationally to the official review of water supplies to 2100 in the region called on Thames Water and the UK Government to implement a version of the Victorian plan. This involves accepting the water being offered by United Utilities from the reservoir at Lake Vyrnwy in Snowdonia and via the Severn get it to the Thames via the restoration of the Cotswold canals and Sapperton tunnel and use it to top up reservoirs during periods of water shortages.

This Congress agreed plan actually made it into the Thames Water 2019 draft plan for water supply for London in the future. However crucially it is not included in the final plan of the current list of things Thames Water plan to do. Had the scheme been implemented hosepipe bans like those of 2022 would not have been necessary.

Instead of this very workable plan one of the things Thames Water is planning to rely on is the hope of consumers cutting daily consumption from 145 litres to 125 litres. This is a misguided approach. Water is not something that is scarce in the UK, in fact, quite the contrary: we use less than 2% of the water that falls each year for human and industrial consumption and irrigation and the other 98% flows into the sea.

Congress is calling on all sections and all Regions of GMB to renew the push for this common sense and financially viable solution to be implemented to avert inevitable severe water shortages in London and the Southeast in times of severe droughts. A red warning light should be flashing that there are currently no practical arrangements in place to avert water shortages in these areas during inevitable periods of severe droughts.

This Lake Vyrnwy scheme has the capacity to supply water to top up reservoirs in London, South East and East of England during periods of drought and as a bonus the Cotswold canals are restored for

leisure and recreational use. It should be noted that at Lake Vyrnwy some 5 million gallons of water flow out of it every day into the sea via the Severn estuary. Snide comments about London stealing Welsh water in the context of severe droughts in parts of the UK, as occurred in the media last summer when GMB London region promoted this scheme, are beneath contempt.

Congress considers that it is essential that there is never a repeat of the near miss of the 2012 drought, so a belt and braces approach is the right one to rule out the £330m daily costs of failure of inadequate water supply in the south east of England.

### **E15 THAMES GENERAL BRANCH** **London Region**

*(Referred)*

ALAN LAW (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 237. Since 2006 GMB London Region has consistently warned that there will be no back-up plan in place for water supplies to cope with once-in-a-lifetime severe drought in London and the south-east and what it would mean for water supplies within the region. The previous very severe drought was back in 1976, and we experienced a less severe one in 2012. The region since then has pressed for urgent action to resurrect a plan first developed in Victorian times to move water from the west of Britain to the area.

A more recent resource board scheme involved expanding the reservoir in the Brecon Beacons for the back-up of storage. The water would be moved via the Severn and Cotswold Canal into the Thames. This involves the restoration of a canal and the sapper tunnel.

More recently, United Utilities offered to provide surplus water supplied from Lake Vyrnwy in Snowdonia. This removes the expanding of a reservoir. It was this scheme which the region and national union pressed Thames Water to adopt in long-term supply plans for London and the south-east. This got no reaction then.

However, there has now been a major change in approach from the water companies and the UK's Department of Environment. After nearly 20 years of campaigning by the GMB London Region, the Department of Environment is now moving towards the plan advocated by the GMB. Speaking to the BBC last August, Sir John Armitt, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, said: "Severn Trent and Thames Water are in talks to transfer water from Wales to the south of England, starting at Lake Vyrnwy" -- I do apologise for the pronunciation to our Welsh colleagues -- "transferred via The Severn and through pipes of canals to the Thames Basin".

At the same time, the *Daily Mail* reported that a senior Conservative MP was pushing the idea of water companies declaring a very unpopular hosepipe ban last summer in London and the south-east. *The Mail* also quoted a spokesman from the Government Department Defra, who said that interior regional water transfers can play an important role in moving water from the areas of the country with plentiful supplies to those in high demand. This is a very big and welcomed change by the water companies and the Government to avert what could be devastating shortages of water in an area with a population of nearly 15 million people. We welcome and refer to the work of GMB Wales & South West Region on the joint campaign. Lake Vyrnwy is a huge reservoir in Snowdonia where there is nearly 90 inches of rainfall each year. It is the same size as 600 football pitches. It was built by the Victorians to supply water to Merseyside. It has now surplus water that can be used elsewhere.

Also mentioned at Lake Vyrnwy is that some five million gallons of water flows out of it every day into the sea via The Severn. Comments about London stealing Welsh water in the context of severe droughts in parts of the UK occurred in the media last summer when GMB London Region promoted this scheme during the hosepipe ban are beyond contempt. This is not the time to go backwards on this plan which is constantly pushed by London Region and the national union. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. I call the seconder. Is that formally seconded? (*The motion was formally seconded*) Thank you. There is no opposition so I call Robbie Scott from the CEC please respond on behalf of the CEC.

ROBBIE SCOTT (CEC ): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motion 227, Composite 16 and Motion 234, which we are supporting with qualifications, and Motion 237, which we are asking to be referred.

Turning to Motion 227, we are supporting the motion with a qualification, that instead of specifying which staffing resources are drawn on the motion, this should be evaluated to make sure that it is implemented in the most effective way.

It has also been reported that the Government may extend the cap on energy bills. Composite 16. We are supporting the composite with the following qualifications. The first is that pressure on the utility companies

needs to be combined with a change in the law to end this practice. Secondly, the list of actions listed in the composite may not necessarily be the most effective means of raising awareness. We ask that those next steps are considered in more detail by the Commercial Services Section and the Communications Department after Congress.

Our final qualification is that while we can support the principle of a single-standard tariff, this should not preclude the introduction of a lower social tariff for low income households which campaigners have called for.

Our qualification for Motion 234 is that this was not Labour Party policy. The re-issued Labour Party spokesperson quote made clear that a Labour Government would not turn off the taps on oil and gas investment. They would stop new licences for new oil and gas fields. However, GMB remains concerned about this policy and sees no conflict between issuing new licences and reaching carbon neutrality. GMB will continue to raise this matter. No new licences would leave us more dependent on imports and put at risk hundreds of thousands of jobs when oil and gas will be needed for decades to come. GMB will continue to raise the matter through the Labour Party National Policy Forum and at all levels of the Labour Party.

Finally, on Motion 237 we are asking that this motion be referred as this is a cross-regional issue so that the effective plans can examine the 1970's plans and assess what updating and implementing them would mean in more detail with national support, if required.

Therefore, Congress, please support Motions 227, 234 and Composite 16 with their qualifications, and for referral on Motion 237. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Robbie. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 227? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Do North West & Irish, London and Midlands regions all accept the qualification on Composite 16? *(Agreed)* Thank you. London Region, do you accept the qualification on Motion 234? *(Agreed)* And do you agree to refer back on Motion 237? *(Agreed)* Brilliant. Thank you. So I can go to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 227, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Composite 16, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 234, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 227 was CARRIED.*

*Composite 16 was CARRIED.*

Motion 234 was CARRIED.

Motion 237 was REFERRED.

### **SPEAKER: Amazon**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I would like to invite our GMB Amazon strikers to come to the stage. (*Applause*) Let me introduce them. They are Garfield Hylton, Salar Kazin Ahmed and Darren Westwood. (*A standing ovation*)

Let me give you a little introduction about them. They made history this year leading our members out on the first official strike in Amazon in the UK ever. (*Applause*)

Our members have been striking for £15 an hour at Amazon's BXH4 warehouse in Coventry after a disgraceful 50 pence pay offer from one of the world's richest companies. Their strike and campaign for GMB recognition at the site continues. Congress, I think you have already shown them your full support. Garfield.

GARFIELD HYLTON: I am from the Midlands Region. I'm a second-time speaker and a first-time delegate. (*Applause*) I would like to take this opportunity with my colleagues to give you an idea of what takes place in Amazon. From my point of view, I am going to focus on the conditions inside Amazon and the hurt that we have. I want to share these stories about the treatment that people receive at the Amazon UK Fulfilment Centres. The first one is about a person called Nick. He has worked at Amazon for six years. He was recently diagnosed with bowel cancer around the time of Covid. On his return to work, he was given light duties with some reasonable adjustments. He rediscovered he was becoming distressed due to the actions from the managers on the floor. They expected him to go to areas of heavy work, he refused, citing his condition and there were numerous times when he was being followed around by managers. We also noted that it always seemed to appear in the areas where he was working that a manager was present.

One manager in particular was making his life extremely uncomfortable for him. He had talks with HR because he was getting down and depressed and he had to threaten them with seeking legal advice to try and redress the situation. Myself and a colleague made him aware that his treatment at work was improper and he exert his rights under disability discrimination law. He was able to ease the stress of the constant pressure by



threatening to take legal action, and only at this point did this particular incident stop with Nick.

The next example I share with you is about the life of a person who worked with us. His name was Randolph. He worked at Coventry but, unfortunately, he was to die. The way he was treated was appalling, and these are his words from the texts that we shared before he passed. I have not edited the first part of the words and they reflect how he was talking to me. He wrote: "It is not from work because it is a critical illness, but asking for support from Amazon, I have to keep pushing them and it is exhausting, all the time after dealing with them for nearly one-and-a-half years. I am having chemo so the hospital gave me a red card with information. Normally, if I am not feeling well, I take a sick off. I inform my manager and share the card with him, which I always keep in my lanyard. I think he will be my point of contact if anything should happen to me while I am at work. Surprise, surprise! He doesn't look at the card. He just said, 'I hope it won't happen here'. I was disappointed and I made a safety complaint on the system. He came to apologise and he said he had been very busy and he started to ask me to explain the card. He just wanted to tick a box in the system. I don't trust all his excuses. I am at stage 4 cancer. Basically, my cancer has spread to my left lymph nodes, and I now also have lymphoedema". In April 2022 with bladder cancer, originally diagnosed in 2021. He underwent chemo and bladder removal in January 2022. By April the cancer spread to other areas, including the lungs.

People should not have to deal with this. At this point in life, somebody with cancer should be able to die with dignity. (*Applause*)

This is my story and it concerns my health problems that I encountered while at work, leading to a formal meeting. My health is changing and I don't realise straightaway. I note that I am making mistakes and errors that I don't normally do. The doctor later informed me that my blood pressure and cholesterol are alarmingly high and my medication is to be increased. I spent the next 11 months informing four managers and recording all the events at work to let them know what is going on for my mistakes and my health in general. In November 2022 the system is giving me a warning regarding my mistakes, which leads to what we refer to as a formal productivity warning. In the meeting, the manager who I informed at the very beginning of this, and halfway into the process of my health, asked a question that annoyed me, that was: "How does and what does diabetes do?" Simple. It kills. I appealed the decision and this was overturned because I showed over the 11 months, which I did not document,

that I tried to make the employer aware and that they had not supported me sufficiently enough.

Now we move on to there is now hope for us in the building. We, as reps, begin by challenging on breaches of employment law. This was the first time that HR on the site had been made aware that their policies were not the law, their discrimination against workers is a clear breach disability discrimination law and employment law. For the first time in four-and-a-half years workers talk about fighting for change and pushing back against managers. They feel they have a voice. By design, 800 people speak as one voice, and Amazon is afraid that in that voice we now see hope.

People who said they wouldn't join the union, who I have spoken to on many occasions, all of a sudden have joined the union, realising that there is always safety in numbers. Everybody now expresses confidence and is prepared to talk about the situation. That is where I finish, and I leave it to my colleagues to take over. Thank you. *(Applause)*

SALAR KAZIM AHMED: Hi, everyone. I am here to talk about a very delicate argument: trust. There is nothing more important in the world than trust. Trust helps us to keep going, to believe in people, but in this case in the company. If trust is missing, we can realise how worthless we are for them. We are just a number, identifiable by a bar code.

Why do we have to bow our heads to the arrogant manager? Why do we have to be sent to heavy labour that can harm us physically? We are the essence of the company, but they haven't figured it out yet. During the most difficult period in the world – I am referring to the beginning of the pandemic – most of the companies shut down. Only the NHS and the company that gave the primary goods were open. But the giants of the web, like Amazon, were able to triple their earnings. We, as workers, have contributed to that growth by risking our lives and our beloved ones. Despite this, we kept working to provide for our families. We knew, somehow, that after Covid we would have to deal with inflation. We assumed that Amazon would take care of us, in the same way we did with them during the pandemic. But not everything is going in the way we believe it should, especially when they betray us. One day during a daily meeting they told us that they would increase our hourly pay by 50 pence. At that precise moment, we realised how worthless we were in the eyes of the company. At that stage, from the workers' faces, you could notice how much frustration and hatred they were feeling towards the company. We had to do something but nobody has made any movement.

In the same week, I decided it was time for a change. With the help of a colleague who is not working any more in the company, we decided to make that fateful move. We informed our colleagues about our intention and, with the spread of our word, we managed to bring people into our team. We wanted answers and we were ready for anything to get them. Unfortunately, things did not go as we planned. Instead of giving us the answer was wanted, they told us to go back to our workplace and keep working. If we did not go inside the FC they would automatically block us out of the system so we would not be paid for the whole shift. We did not let them intimidate us and we managed to stay in the canteen waiting for answers that did not arise.

In a most difficult situation, in the whole canteen just one person caught my attention. The name of this person is Darren. I immediately noticed how he was supporting the people who were around him and how he was able to manage the situation in a way that was calm. Not everyone would come forward to hand in a second strike the next morning, but he did. From that day, a friendship was born and a common purpose as well. Help our colleagues to have more respect. In those days, we lost the battle but it had just begun and it is not over yet.

With the arrival of the GMB, we have changed the rules of the game. We started posing a threat to Amazon. We are not heroes. We are workers. We are fighting for our rights. If we are remembered in the history of revolution, so be it. Even giants fall. (*Applause and cheers*)

DARREN WESTWOOD: Thank you all so much for inviting us to tell our stories, and thanks for all the support you have given, the messages, the donations and even standing on some picket lines. It has been fantastic.

Way back in August I felt there was nothing we could do. I took these people out into Coventry town centre. I thought Lady Godiva would be symbolic, but because of the diversity of the workforce most people don't know who Lady Godiva was, so we just aimed for Primark. Everyone knows Primark. We were lucky enough – to be fair, they had been tipped off – GMB Midlands were waiting for us. They have had our backs ever since. Hence why we are here now. We have had 16 days of strike action, but I will always remember the first one. The first one was such a gamble because it was such a big one. We were taking Amazon out. GMB Midlands decided that we wanted to do it at midnight because we had got so much press covered, and they thought it would be fantastic to see those people walk

out rather than not just turn up for work. Those people clocked out of their stations, walked passed managers to go and clock out and they did it. Not only did they do that, they walked through security constantly being monitored by cameras. They went and got their belongings, walked up the stairs that were lined with managers and security, walked across a bridge that felt like The Green Mile, walked down the stairs and through the security gate once again, all the time being watched by managers. We had forgotten how long it took and we expected them to turn up at midnight, but it did not happen. While we were waiting, the fog came down and that little yellow smile, which is actually the wrong way up, broke through the fog and suddenly we saw these shadows coming through. Hollywood could not have done a better job on that day. It was fantastic, and those people are the bravest people I have ever met in my life to do what they did. Do you know what? Since then – I know it's been 16 days – those people keep coming and coming. Inside that fulfilment centre in Coventry, it used to be one in 50 were members of the GMB. When we walked out in January, it was one in five. As it stands today, we are the majority. *(Applause)*

So we put the letter for recognition in and Amazon came and talked to us. It's all great. No, it's not. They employ a thousand more people in there to dilute our numbers. They have moved the goal posts again, and it's not fair. They planted people on the picket line last time to try and wind our young lads up, but we are not there for a fight. We are there because we need more money. There are people in the JC because we need more money. As to myself, the GMB called me a leader. Amazon call me a troublemaker. But I'm not. I'm a dad. *(Applause)*

Once again, I am going to ask you for your help because I know in every region you have got a fulfilment centre, and I know that, across the country, there are 70,000 people just like us who are just waiting for you to speak to them. They might not speak the same language but we can help. We have translated our leaflets into quite a few languages. We will come up and stand on the gates with you in the pouring rain. It doesn't bother us any more, but those people who are there just want you with them. They don't understand what a union is. It has taken us this long to get so many members. Now we've got them, we're not going to lose them. They are just one big family. There are people in there who wouldn't speak to me before. Now I go in and they are my best friends. We can do this. Amazon needs to pay better. It needs to improve health and safety and it needs to treat its staff better. They have a slogan which you see as soon as you walk through the door: "Have fun. Make history". That's what we are doing. I'll

tell you now, we're having a whale of a time. Thank you, very much. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Goodness! What can you say after that? (*Presentation made*) Thank you. *That* is so inadequate, but we wish you all the success for your campaign. You've got our whole support. Other regions will join you, I know. Other Amazon warehouses in other regions are taking up that fight as well. As Garfield whispered to me, "We're going to smash them!"

Congress, that concludes this morning's business. You get a bit of an extra long lunch break. Please be back at 2 o'clock.

(*Congress adjourned for lunch break*)

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

*Congress assembled at 2.00 p.m.*

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, can I call Congress to order, please. Thank you. Take your seats quickly. I have one announcement. The York Disabled Workers Co-operative wants to thank all the GMB regions for the tremendous support throughout 2023. There are still some good prizes left and order your flags and placards from 100% trade union organised factories. Many thanks. (*Applause*)

Can I just make you aware of the changes to the published schedule? We have carried over from this morning Motions 238, 239, 240, and 242. These will be debated first after the awards. We will then move on to Motion 229 on Energy Prices that has been restored to the agenda following the vote on FOC Report 1; that is put back in the agenda. This motion will be debated this afternoon after the John McLean Health & Safety Award. We then have three extra motions to debate on schools, these are Motions 144, 146, and Emergency Motion 4 on Ofsted. These will be taken as separate groups of motions after the group starting with Composite 12. I do not expect you to remember any of that but I will be going through it anyway. There is no standing orders report so we can move straight on to the Eleanor Marks Award.

## **ELEANOR MARX AWARD**

THE PRESIDENT: Eleanor Marx was, of course, one of the founding figures of our union, who served on our Executive and she was a guiding spirit behind

our first rulebook. Each Congress we dedicate the Eleanor Marks Award for outstanding women activists and I am delighted to say that Maddy Wilkinson, of North West & Irish Region, is the winner of this year's award. (Applause) Maddy is a tireless equal pay campaigner who has overseen the development of so many reps within GMB and grown Cumbria County Council's Branch by 25%. Her campaigns in recent years have included the Menopause at Work, Food Aid to Members, and encouraging discussions of men's health issues at work. Maddy, thank you. (Applause)

MADDY WILKINSON (North West & Irish): First time ever to Congress. (Applause) Although the award has been given to me it is part of the team and I have to say 12 months prior to this there is no way I would be stood here. Thanks to Paul McCarthy and everybody at the North West & Irish Region for supporting the Cumbria Branch in everything that we have tried to achieve. Thank you. (Applause)

### **MARY MACARTHUR HEALTH & SAFETY REP OF THE YEAR AWARD**

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Maddy, again. We now move on to the presentation of the Mary MacArthur Health & Safety Rep of the Year Award. The Award is named after Mary MacArthur, founder of the National Federation of Women Workers, which became part of what is now GMB and a proud suffragette who fought sweat shop labour. I am very pleased to announce that the Award this year is to Simon Wilde of London Region for his outstanding work to negotiate a new risk assessment system at Best Food that has led to a sharp reduction in injuries. Well done, Simon.

SIMON WILDE (London): Thank you very much. Receiving an award like this does not really happen to people like me, just a humble truck driver from Manchester. This award is not just about me, it is about all of us here in this room today in the daily fights and struggles we all deal with on a daily basis. I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people who helped get the GMB a great result within my company. First of all, Mick Veerer, Anya Houllier, William Scullion, Paul McCartney, and Jose Suaris. These guys had my back all the way through the process, it gave me the drive and the determination knowing I had such support from my colleagues. The young lady sat over there, Lindsey Mann, she was immense all the way through this, she still continues to support us, and I would also like to thank Nadine Houghton, our National Officer. Thank you very much. (Applause)

## **JOHN McCLEAN HEALTH AND SAFETY BRANCH OR WORKPLACE OF THE YEAR AWARD**

THE PRESIDENT: Well done again, Simon. We will finally introduce a new award this year. It is the John McClean Award, named after our former National Health & Safety Officer who sadly passed away last year. John joined the union in 1976 and he worked for the union for 22 years, first in London Region, and then in the National Office before he retired in 2015. Even after his retirement John remained active in the Joint Union Asbestos Committee and the Asbestos in Schools Campaign. He is dearly missed by all those who worked with him. John believed that health and safety was always a team effort and never about one individual. It is fitting that this award is made on a collective basis to a whole branch or workplace. The winner of the inaugurate award is the Asda Bulwell Nottingham Home Shopping Centre Safety Reps Team, whose campaigns included overturning an expectation that members would work in minus 20 degrees temperatures and who removed defective fire safety equipment. It is my great pleasure to invite the winners on to the stage, Belinda Tong, John Gibney, and Geoff Grieves. (*Applause*)

A DELEGATE: I have been thrown in the deep end on this one, I am afraid. On behalf of all three of us we would like to thank everyone who nominated us for this award. We are all feeling a bit overwhelmed to be the first recipients of this award, the John McClean Award, and by winning this award it has made us more determined to carry on his legacy to improve health and safety in the workplace. When we took on this role of GMB reps at Asda HSC in Nottingham we also took on the role of health and safety reps. With just over a year's experience we were under no illusion we had our work cut out. We were up against a management team who had a cavalier attitude to health and safety and due to the fact they had never been challenged on breaches of health and safety regulations we three were determined to change that. So we increased our membership and it was through the increased membership that we knew we could fight them, so we took them on and we took them on, on several fronts. The main front which mainly was the fire safety aspect they, to say the least, were very, very aggressive towards that. During the fire focus week we did in fact do an inspection and found a lot of breaches regarding fire extinguishers.

Linda made a report and tried to hand it to the GSM, who blatantly refused to take the report off us. It was at that point we got Ben involved and we demanded a meeting with all senior managers. When they realised, or the GSM realised, what fight he was facing, a possible £380,000 fine, and

prosecution, the penny dropped and since then we have made headway, slow headway, within the realms of health and safety but I feel if you want to look for the support of our members and branch this is not just our award, it is their award. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done again to all our winners and what a really lovely positive way to start the afternoon session.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: CLIMATE CHANGE**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now come to debating motions under Social Policy: Climate Change, and can I ask the mover of Motion 238 to come to the rostrum, and seconders, and speakers for Motions 239, 240 and 242, please make yourselves ready as well.

### **INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION TO ESTABLISH THE COSTS FOR THE UK OF NET ZERO MOTION 238**

#### **238. INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION TO ESTABLISH THE COSTS FOR THE UK OF NET ZERO**

Congress calls on the Labour Party to make a manifesto commitment that early in the next Parliament it will establish an independent investigation to establish and publish the likely range of costs for the UK to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and put forward proposals to fund these costs in a progressive manner.

Congress notes that the only available official estimate is the 2021 OBR figure of £1,400 billion. This is an estimate based on a range of scenarios from the CCC and the Bank of England. The OBR says some savings could be made but that these are highly uncertain.

This amounts to £46.7 billion each year every year for 30 years. The real costs could be higher or lower as there are so many unknowns. It is not yet known how much of £1,400 billion will be incurred when during the 30-year period.

The phasing of these costs is in the hands of the Government and Parliament. It is essential that the Labour Party manifesto should be clear on the principles it will follow to meet costs of this magnitude.

Congress recognises that there are huge benefits for the UK using renewables and nuclear power to end its reliance on imported energy sources. There are also potential benefits from investing in technologies yet to be developed to scale to replace gas for industrial use and home heating. It is essential that the pace of change in the UK develops in lock step with the development of the alternative technologies and that the costs are levied in a progressive manner. Labour must resist an approach based on policy by aspiration.

For the 27.8 million households in the UK, the OBR estimate entail annual costs of £46.7 billion over 30 years add up an average cost per household of £1,680. This amounts to £32.30 each week every week. Over the 30 years this is £50,400 per household.



The Labour Party manifesto commitment should specifically recognise that these costs are way beyond the means of families on average incomes or below.

Any progressive scheme to pay these huge costs should recognise that cuts in taxes on employment for all workers except the higher paid and benefit increases will be needed to offset carbon taxes and charges and carbon replacement technology costs.

A recognition of these huge costs should temper any plans by the Labour Party to bring the UK net zero carbon target forward from the internationally recognised 2050. The UK should stick with the 2050 target. This is a very big and very challenging target. Labour must reject apocalyptic catastrophism on this issue which is not based on the main line assessment of the IPCC.

The UK population is about 1% of the global total. In the GDP per head international league the UK is not in the top 30. The argument that the UK has to provide global leadership on this by leading by example is a throwback to an outdated imperial mindset and is a failure to recognise that a global problem can only be sorted by coordinated global action and by the development of technologies that currently do not yet exist at scale. The UK should be part of attempts to coordinate global action and should invest in the new technologies required to achieve net zero.

## **G20 ENERGY CENTRAL BRANCH**

### **London Region**

*(Carried)*

PAUL BLOCK (London): Congress, in June 2029 a UK parliament adopted a legal target to achieve net zero carbon emissions in the UK by 2050. What is remarkable about the way this legislation was passed is that neither the Government nor the parliamentarians who voted the target into law had any official estimates of how much achieving the target would cost or who would pay for it. What is even more remarkable is that four years later there is still no official government publication on the gross and net cost for meeting this target, and who is going to pay the costs. What we have instead is a series of estimates from various sources with little information about the details.

The official OBR estimate mentioned in the motion is most high profile and widely quoted. We had the Treasury estimate in a letter from the then Chancellor to the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, leaked to the Financial Times as the legislation was going through parliament. It rubbished estimates from the official climate change committee saying that the cost would be 40% higher, more than 1,000bn, we had the 1,300bn estimate from the OBR with highly speculative estimates for savings in lower energy bills, and lower running costs of electric cars for lower net cost.

The electricity systems operator (the ESO) is a part of the national grid which, in April 2022, the Government planned legislation to nationalise it. This is the body that has the minute by minute responsibility to manage the

balance of the electricity in the national grid so as to keep the lights on. In July 2022, the ESO published its own official estimates. The ESO workers are trades union members and are probably most highly skilled and experienced people in the whole energy sector on how the system actually works. Their estimates of the costs of net zero are much higher than the previous estimates, including that by the OBR. Their future energy scenario report says that reaching net zero will cost the UK an astonishing 3,000bn. This does not include any costs for air travel or shipping, either.

The truth is that we do not actually know what meeting this legal target will cost other than it will be very expensive. In truth, we do not actually yet know what technology will be the most widely used for home heating, for powering heavy industries, or for transport. There are many promising candidates in each area in development. The motion calls on the next Labour government to end this way of dealing with crucial component of public policy by setting up an independent investigation to provide official estimates on costs and how to best meet these in a progressive way. It should be done by engineering, technical, and other energy experts, including economists and financial specialists to properly study all involved, and produce reports based on the best available information to parliament on this whole area.

The motion set out that no more targets should be adopted on the hoof. Reject scare tactics, not stood up in the IPCC scientific process, and calls for hard headed realism about how the UK fits in with global efforts to solve a global problem. Congress, I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Secunder? Formally is that? Yes? Cheers.

*Motion 238 was formally seconded.*

THE PRESIDENT: The mover of Motion 239?

## **PROMOTION OF THE NET ZERO TARGET MOTION 239**

### **239. PROMOTION OF THE NET ZERO TARGET**

This Congress needs to acknowledge the report from Chris Skidmore and the promotion of the net zero target to be brought forward to 2025.

British Gas is currently involved in Stage 2 with Ofgem and is working with the Gas Distribution Networks as the in-home conversion partner to investigate the work required to convert every home and business in the area to 100% hydrogen. This means that BG engineers are the face of the project for

residents and for completing surveys in properties to understand what work would be required to convert the area to running on 100% hydrogen.

This Congress needs to campaign more strongly, create more visibility and lobby the consideration of the good quality unionised workplace and minimise offshore employment and infrastructure. Congress need to promote the use of infrastructures within UK manufacturing producing jobs for UK workers and GMB members as building the UK's hydrogen economy has the potential for 75,000 jobs, according to the Hydrogen Taskforce 2020 Economic Impact Assessment.

**G22 GAS STAFF AND SERVICES BRANCH**  
**Midlands Region**

*(Carried)*

DOROTA CHRUSTEK (Midlands): I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* This Congress moves to acknowledge hydrogen revolution. Do you know that British Gas is currently involved in investigating the work required to convert every home and business to 100% hydrogen. This means that British Gas engineers are the face of the public for residents and for competing services in properties to understand what work will be required to convert the area to 100% hydrogen. This Congress needs to campaign more strongly to create more visibility and lobby the consideration of the good qualities of a unionised workplace and minimise offshore employment and infrastructure.

Congress, we need to promote the use of infrastructures within the UK, manufacturing promising jobs for UK workers and GMB members, building a safe hydrogen economy that has the potential of 75,000 jobs. I have no personal value but I can tell you that hydrogen is our future so, Congress, I am asking you to support my motion. I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Brilliant. Well done. A seconder, please?

STEPHEN ALEXANDER (Midlands): In 2022 the Government commissioned an independent review of net zero with a target for 2050, that target has now been brought forward to 2025 through Chris Skidmore's report. British Gas launched various new services saying that was reducing household emissions, cutting energy bills, and British Gas states in its latest report that they intend to recruit an apprentice a day until 2030. The company intends to train and employ 3,500 new engineers with green skills to install and main electric vehicle charging points, insulation, solar panels, hydrogen ready boilers, and heat pumps. As you have already heard from Dorota they feel the hydrogen is the future. What the future is for us the GMB will be missing a trick if we do not use this amazing opportunity to recruit these workers. We have heard from Keir Starmer this morning, he wants that

energy industry to be unionised jobs and I think that is where we are going with this. It is an amazing opportunity. Get organised and boost the industry. We need to make sure this potential number of jobs comes into unionised workplaces and unionised jobs, GMB jobs, in this country. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. You are very disciplined this year, Steve. Thank you. Can I have the mover of Motion 240, please?

## **LABOUR SHOULD DROP “PIE IN THE SKY” ELECTRICITY PLAN FOR 2030 MOTION 240**

### **240. LABOUR SHOULD DROP “PIE IN THE SKY” ELECTRICITY PLAN FOR 2030**

Congress notes that as part of the Labour Party pledge to make the UK electricity supply carbon free by 2030 it plans to quadruple offshore wind capacity and double onshore wind capacity. This means an additional 42GW of offshore wind energy and a further 14GW on shore wind capacity.

This would require the installation of a further at least 3,200 giant wind turbines - with the towers and foundations fabricated from 8 million tonnes of steel. The numbers of turbine towers required are likely to be higher- as the onshore wind turbines are likely to be smaller than those offshore.

There are at least four problems with this plan to have carbon free electricity by 2030 as follows:

- First, the time required for the fabrication and installation of this number of wind turbines means that it cannot be done by 2030.
- Second, the time required to install the electricity transmission infrastructure to get this wind power into the grid means that it cannot be done by 2030.
- Third, there is no capacity in the UK to fabricate 8 million tonnes of steel into the wind turbine towers and foundations. All the jobs required to do the steel fabrication will have to be based - as they have been to date with the 28GW so far installed UK wind capacity- in the Far East.
- Fourth, on very cold days in December 2022 the total installed wind capacity delivered 1GW electricity and gas fired power stations were needed to deliver two thirds of the electricity required to keep electricity flowing. Another 42GW of installed wind capacity would not replace the gas as low wind was general over Britain. This is not something unique. One day in six there is little or no wind.

These are hard facts that cannot be ignored. Congress calls for Labour to go back to the drawing board so as to come forward with something other than this pie in the sky cloud cuckoo fantasyland policy for 2030 to put before the electorate on electricity generation in 2030.

Hard-headed realism suggests that there is no alternative to gas fired power stations for reliable electricity by 2030. Labour should stick to the net zero carbon emissions target date of 2050. In addition, Labour should get serious about developing steel fabrication capacity and jobs as part of a green energy supply chain in the UK as part of net zero by 2050.

**G20 ENERGY CENTRAL BRANCH  
London Region**

*(Carried)*

PAUL BLOCK (London): Congress, the motion says that what Labour is currently proposing for net zero electricity generation in Britain by 2030 is not possible. There is no alternative to the current gas-fired power stations in 2030 to keep the lights on during the one in six days when there is no wind. Nothing that Keir Starmer says can change this statement of fact that someone famously said, facts are stubborn things. The current large scale generation of electricity from wind and sun in Britain will leave huge and sudden gaps. There are deep doldrums of wind that can last for days, typically in the mid-winter when power demand is greatest and when there is no solar either. Delft University in Holland says these high pressure weather systems can last for up to 50-100 hours and much longer during freak years.

Strategic net zero back-up, the worst extreme, is needed. Carbon capture and storage is possible. On Teesside net power is already developing a zero emissions gas station with CO<sub>2</sub> piped into the North Sea. Whitetail Clean Energy is a 300 megawatt plant that might be on stream in 2025 at Wilton. However, Wilton is just 300 megawatts. Over 20 gigawatts of net zero electricity are needed to replace the current gas stations. If the solution is over 20 gigawatt plants like Wilton costs will be high in view of having to keep them on standby for ever reduced hours. If Labour is prepared to go down that road it cannot be done by 2030.

There are other possible solutions but they are not yet available. One candidate is the UK's high view power using electricity to deepfreeze compressed air that can be stored in steel towers. This is equivalent to using electricity to pump water to a mountain-top reservoir and then allow the water to flow downhill to generate electricity when needed. With compressed air when the process is reversed it can provide back-up electricity for up to 60 hours. We do not know yet whether it will succeed and at what price. Another candidate is Rolls Royce developing a 470 megawatt mini version of today's nuclear reactors. It aims to lower the cost while relying on a nuclear supply chain that already exists and could be in service by the early 2030s. There are now other possible solutions using hydrogen and nuclear.

There is every reason to be optimistic and hope that net zero electricity is coming but it is simply not possible by 2030 so instead of its fantasy land target for 2030 Labour should get stuck into the technology engineering and economic challenges that would deliver net zero electricity maybe

over the next decade or so, and good luck to GMB delegates at next month's Labour Party Policy Forum on getting the Labour leadership to face this reality. The election outcome could depend on it. The electorate know these stubborn facts and will not risk the lights going out. Please support this motion. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Seconder? Thank you, I am liking this.

*Motion 240 was formally seconded.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the mover of Motion 242, please?

## **ENVIRONMENT MOTION 242**

### **242. ENVIRONMENT**

This Congress has noted that the UN has highlighted that unless the rise in the volume of greenhouse gases plateaus in the next 18 months, and begins to fall, we have no hope of avoiding the possibility of a runaway climate.

Back in 2015 in Paris the UN struck a deal where richer countries would help poorer nations adapt and there would be a limit placed on global warming so that it would never increase beyond 2°C and ideally not increase beyond 1.5°C. The reason these targets were set, was in order to avoid the potential of a runaway climate caused by the planet itself releasing its vast storehouse of greenhouse gasses. Should this happen all life as we know it would come to an end on this planet.

This is not some drug induced theory, dreamt up in a commune somewhere, it is now scientific fact accepted by 99.9% of all scientists. If we exceed 1.5°C of warming we are playing Russian roulette with an ever increasing number of chambers filled with bullets. Once we reach 2°C of warming we have no hope of recovery. Despite this due to the desire to produce western products cheaply and increase their standard of living to that seen on television, developing nations are reliant on coal and other fossil fuels, as it is cheap and plentiful.

To combat this it has become the responsibility of every person in a developed country to reduce their carbon footprint. To learn energy saving tips and skills that can help them now in reducing their energy costs.

We call on Congress and the Central Executive Council to task the Education Department to develop training courses for all of its members to assist them in learning energy and other money /climate saving skills and simple tricks, i.e.:

- Boiling a kettle with an additional litre of water in it over and above the water you need, uses enough energy to keep a led household bulb burning for 10 hours. So only boil the water you need.
- In general it is more energy and water efficient to use a dishwasher than washing them by hand, especially if you only use it when it is filled. This can be improved by using the energy-saving mode to conserve half the water (and water heating energy) used by other cycles. If possible, choose an air-dry cycle that uses unheated air to dry your dishes. You can save about 15-50

percent of your dishwasher's operational cost with this feature.

- Turning down the flow temperature of a boiler will not reduce the temperature it warms the house by but it will only slow the speed a room is heated. Doing this could save you an average of £100 a year.
- Turning appliances off at the socket could save a further £70 a year on average. Especially phone chargers and other transformer devices, when not in use, as they still drain power.

**M23 GMB UNITE BRANCH**  
**London Region**

*(Carried)*

DAVE KENT (London): My comrade Jamie was due to speak on this motion but he has had a family bereavement so he cannot be here today. This is his speech: Oh, no, you might sigh, not another motion about the environment and climate change but have you ever thought about why you might think that, why the same things keep coming back to us at Congress year after year. The latest findings from the UN note that unless global action takes place to curb the rise in greenhouse gases within the next 18 months we have no hope of reversing climate change. We can cross our fingers or hope for some Star Trek type tech solution or we can leave it to our children to sort out, we tell ourselves; it is not that bad, perhaps we will discover something that makes it all right in the end. It is natural for us to think that. We procrastinate, or most of us do.

On the whole, trade union members are more active and more involved than other people. We should direct that activism into assisting people to understand the impact their day-to-day actions have on the environment. It does not have to be big and it does not have to be onerous. Just an acknowledgement, a drive in our education courses to speak about this threat which arguably is as much of a threat as, say, unruly bosses or badly applied health and safety laws. Sharing insights that the GMB has gained from the trades it works in combined with sensible social initiatives such as letting people know if community heating is available in an area or sharing tips on how responsibly to use electricity, or promoting recycling at work. Although not all these can be done by everyone we can at least impart this knowledge to the next generation of activists to help them continue what we have started.

Congress, please support this motion. We have only one planet. For a little extra consideration and a little extra education we can build on the work

done at previous congresses and ensure that in two years' time we are not back here saying it is too late. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Thank you for stepping in at the last minute and please give our good wishes to your colleague. London, seconder?

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): It seems like yesterday I was here as a first-time speaker but talking of yesterday I know there is a couple of people in the room made some decisions going out last night, obviously not me, I would never do that, but some people went out last night and some people were a little bit groggy this morning. This is supposed to be this morning's speech so I was picking up on that. Obviously, some of you might regret those decisions you made in the past, not maybe having a couple of waters before you went to bed, and stuff like that. So, yesterday was good, yesterday was great, you had a good time.

It is a bit like the environment, isn't it? Today I am having to stand before you because of the choices we have made in the past. We have not made our change quick enough. We have to address the critical issue that affects every single one of us, climate change. The United Nations gave a warning which has already been given by the person who moved the motion, and in Paris the goal was clear, the environment cannot heat up by more than 2 degrees but ideally 1.5. This hypothesis was not conceived in some far off commune as some of the conspiracy theorists come out with. It is scientifically accepted facts by 99.9% of the scientific community. If we accede 1.5 degrees we are playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette with our future. If we reach 2 degrees, there will be no turning back, just to be clear on that.

Therefore, I call on GMB and our education department to make a comprehensive training course and courses that will equip people with knowledge and skills that will reduce energy consumption and adopt friendly climate practices. Today is the time, today is the time to take responsibility, today is the time for action, today is the time to make sustainable choices; in doing so we can collectively make a significant impact on the fight against climate change. Today let us prioritise the issues and invest in an education and awareness programme and together we can create a tomorrow for our children, and the next generation. Please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)



THE PRESIDENT: I was just about to step in there, Luke. Well done. If there is nobody speaking in opposition of these motions can I ask Shane Allinson to respond from the CEC, please.

SHANE ALLINSON (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 238, 240, and 242, asking that they all be supported with qualifications.

On Motion 238, Independent Investigation to establish the cost for the UK of net zero, this motion is very similar to a motion submitted by the branch to Congress in 2022, which was supported with qualifications. In line with the CEC stance to that motion, which was carried by Congress, it should be noted that the cost of £1,400bn is a total OBR estimate of the cost of decarbonisation, and that the net estimate was £344bn or £7.93 per household per week. This is still a substantial figure and the burden must not fall on ordinary working people. Both estimates should stand together. It is existing GMB policy to support the 2050 net zero target and for the UK to develop international policies and solutions in response to a global problem as outlined in the 2021 Special Report on Energy and Climate.

On Motion 240, Labour should drop the pie-in-the-sky electricity plan for 2030. The CEC is supporting the motion with the qualification that important questions remain unanswered about the Labour Party's policy. It is unclear, for example, whether the gas-fired stations will continue beyond 2030, if they are still fitted with carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS). This is an important industrial issue for us. A stronger commitment to nuclear is also needed if the target has any hope of being met. We are seeking the freedom to secure additional commitments and reassurances as we head into the July 2023 National Policy Forum meeting and to be able to respond positively if those commitments are secured. GMB will continue to raise the matter and our concerns through the Labour Party National Policy Forum and at all levels of the Labour Party.

Finally, on Motion 242, Environment, our qualification is to note that while these steps represent useful advice that members may wish to take into account, these would not be relevant to all homes and workplaces and they are not binding on members. Please support these motions with these qualifications outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Shane. Does London accept the qualification in Motion 238? (*Agreed*) And 240? (*Agreed*) And 242? (*Agreed*) Thank you. The CEC is supporting 239. Malcolm and I are going to do a little bit of different voting this afternoon. It will make it quicker, actually. Because

there has been no opposition, the regions have supported their qualification, and the CEC supports the motions, and we are taking it as one block vote. All those in favour of Motion 238, 239, 240, and 242, please show? Thank you. Any against? Those motions are all carried.

*Motion 238 was CARRIED*

*Motion 239 was CARRIED*

*Motion 240 was CARRIED*

*Motion 242 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 7, which is Social Policy: the Energy and Utilities Market. We will debate Motion 229 and I will invite London Region to move and second this motion. The CEC is supporting the motion. There will be no other additional speakers unless any delegate wishes to speak against. Thank you.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: THE ENERGY AND UTILITIES MARKET**

### **ENERGY PRICES IN THE UK**

#### **MOTION 229**

#### **229. ENERGY PRICES IN THE UK**

This Congress notes that EDF (Electricity De France) a French Nationalised Electricity Supplier supplies energy in the UK.

**EDF energy prices have risen by 4% in France compared to 54% in UK and this State-owned firm was forced to take a £7billion pound hit to protect French households. (Source: Wales online 7 April 2022)**

This news from last year shows how a single supplier can treat customers in their own country and customers in the UK completely differently.

We have recently heard of a mathematician stating that he could not calculate which tariff was going to be cheapest for him and even our members with many years experience in the industry are also struggling, so what chance has the public got?

Congress, what is the point of OFGEM the industry regulator if things like this are allowed to happen? We have a Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Grant Schapps who is just three months into his role.

Part of the problem with the Energy Supply industry in the UK is that we do not seem to take it seriously and have through years of poor decision-making allowed the system to be weak in terms of energy security. This system is not delivering good value for the customers.

Congress, why is Electricity so much cheaper in France than the UK? There is not one single answer, but it could be that it is because EDF is State Owned and this is a massive factor. It is also fair to point out that they are the largest operator of nuclear reactors except for America, unlike the UK, France do not have to burn gas to generate electricity. Gas prices are obviously much higher now because of Putin's disgraceful war against the Ukraine.

We call on GMB to ask the Government to have a cross party agreement for Energy as it is a critical part of our infrastructure to provide energy security for the future. This agreement should be tasked with making commitments to long term policy so that both of the main parties and others if possible sign on to long term decisions such as increasing nuclear power generation in the UK as well as renewable energy and new technologies.

Many energy suppliers have gone bust so the theory of privatisation providing increased competition clearly has not worked. This therefore needs to be challenged once again.

Energy prices were already high before last year, the prices are now at ridiculous levels that unfortunately many of our members will already be struggling to pay. There has never been a better time to start the push back against capitalism and the so-called free market which is penalising the poorest members of the Union and our communities the most.

Our policy of re-nationalising the Electricity and Gas industries must be strongly pushed and vocalised for the sake of our members, the elderly, sick and vulnerable.

It is very honourable that this great Union has this policy but when was it last pushed or enforced! Our members need GMB to shout more loudly now more than ever.

The Energy sector in the UK is not working for the Customers. It was set up by the taxpayer and previously any surplus revenue went back into the Government. We do not believe it was set up to pay CEO's and Directors million-pound salaries and shareholders' profits.

## **G20 ENERGY CENTRAL BRANCH**

### **London Region**

*(Carried)*

PAUL BLOCK (London): EDF Energy prices have risen 4% in France compared to 54% in the UK. This state-owned firm was forced to take a £7bn hit to protect French households. Congress, this should concern us all just in case any of you do not realise EDF stands for Electricity to France and is their state-owned electricity supplier. It is immoral and disgraceful to allow private companies to make huge profits at the expense of our members and customers that have to buy heat and run their homes. I put it to you it is time for a change.

I ask that the GMB lobby the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. I also ask that this is discussed within the Labour Party in preparation for them hopefully getting elected at the next election. I think it is time for electricity and gas to be brought back into public ownership so that the pricing can be more carefully controlled as it is in France, for example. The energy industries have been run for too long following a capitalist model that allows the businesses to be used as a vehicle for profit, a lot of which, by the way, goes out of this country. Salaries being paid to CEOs are above £1m per annum and directors also

get very good salaries and shareholders get good returns. There is a theme there, isn't there. Strangely enough, however, some of the staff that work in the industry are not that well paid and, ironically, may well be in fuel poverty. Profits from these industries in the past went back into government coffers and some were reinvested in the infrastructure to keep up with technology and for maintenance purposes.

Ofgem, the industry regulator, should also be held accountable as they seem to wield very little power to actually help members and customers. Until such time as these industries are renationalised the very least we should hope for is a regulator that has the ability to drive prices down. It is extremely difficult for most people to understand the best energy tariff to be on and competition has been greatly reduced by the number of suppliers that have gone bankrupt in the last year or so.

When the electricity industry, which I have worked in all my working life, was privatised I remember a couple of statements were made: one, it would bring increased competition; two, customer services would improve and be more efficient. I am afraid to say both of these statements are clearly not true, the bills have increased horrendously and the service has not improved. I see this regularly and it is very frustrating. In summary, it cannot be right that in 2023 our members' energy costs are putting them potentially into fuel poverty.

Whilst exiting my company van with large logos marked on the side I have been asked by a few people recently, how can they reduce their bills. One of the people was elderly and was really concerned about his rising cost as he was retired and needs to heat his home. I honestly believe that the only way really to resolve this issue is to return the electricity and gas industries to publicly owned companies. The prices need to come down. *(Applause)* Thanks. The companies need to be run to provide the services for the customers and not run to create massive profits and pay out CEOs excessively large salaries. Services that are essential should not be used to make excessive profit. If elderly people cannot afford to run their heating there is a very real risk to their health in the winter. Congress, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Paul. He has done well this afternoon to move so many motions. Thank you. Seconder? Thank you. That does help with timings this afternoon. That is really appreciated. Thank you.

*Motion 229 was formally seconded.*

THE PRESIDENT: Is there anyone wishing to speak against? No? That leads straight to the vote. Because the CEC is supporting this motion all those in favour of Motion 229 please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 229 was CARRIED.*

## **THE CEC SPECIAL REPORT: PUBLIC SECTOR PAY**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to item 9, the Special Report debate on Public Sector Pay, and I will set out how I will take this debate. The Special Report will be moved and seconded by June Minnery and Arron Bevan- John from the CEC, I will then invite each region to speak on the report in reverse alphabetical order, from London through to Wales and South West. Please note that motions 162 and 163 appear next on your programme but these motions have been withdrawn. The next debate after the report will be on Composite 12 and Motions 143 and 151, so if you could be ready to speak when you hear this debate ending. I call on June Minnery, thank you.

### **CEC Special Report Public Sector Pay**

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#### **List of acronyms**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AfC    | Agenda for Change                                    |
| CPI    | Consumer Price Index                                 |
| COSLA  | Convention of Scottish Local Authorities             |
| EA     | Environment Agency                                   |
| EOC    | Emergency Operations Centre                          |
| ILO    | International Labour Organisation                    |
| NHSPRB | NHS Pay Review Body                                  |
| NJC    | National Joint Council for Local Government Services |
| ONS    | Office for National Statistics                       |
| PRBs   | Pay Review Bodies                                    |
| RPI    | Retail Prices Index                                  |
| SCP    | Spinal Column Point                                  |
| STUC   | Scottish Trades Union Congress                       |
| TNA    | The National Archives                                |

## 1. Summary of policy positions adopted

- 1.1 As set out in this report, it is an important and longstanding principle that Congress does not seek to bind the hands of our negotiators. Our industrial negotiations will always be in the hands of our members.
- 1.2 Public sector pay setting is also a matter of government policy, and it is important that GMB has a clear stance on those central questions. This report commits the union through our policy and political work to campaign for:
  - **Restorative pay rises and fully funded settlements.**
  - **Fundamental reforms to the Pay Review Body process.**
  - **Reform of civil service pay-setting to end the fragmentation and drift since the abolition of central pay bargaining.**
  - **The restoration of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).**
  - **Opposing regionalised public sector pay policies.**
  - **Funding for settling historic equal pay claims.**
  - **Ending the injustice of the two-tier workforce, including by building on the legacy of the Fair Wages Resolution, the Two-Tier Code, and ILO standards (including by learning from policy in Wales).**

## 2. Introduction

2.1 The UK is in the grip of a pay crisis – real average wages are lower than they were fifteen years ago.<sup>1</sup> GMB has set out its campaigns for pay increases across the economy. The ability to change public sector pay levels sits directly in Whitehall, local authorities, and devolved governments. The worst public sector pay squeeze in history has left our essential services crumbling. Public sector pay is a policy as well as an industrial issue.

2.2 Public sector workers' pay has been subject to the deepest and most enduring squeeze on record – worse even than during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Long-serving workers' pay has been cut by more than 20 per cent in real terms. These cuts have fallen disproportionately on women workers. The financial crash was not caused by teaching assistants, 999 caller handlers, or refuse workers, but politicians decided that our members would pay the price. The disastrous increase in vacancies and our breaking public services are the result.

2.3 Public sector pay doesn't just affect 5.8 million directly employed workers. There are more than 2.4 million children in households that contain at least one public sector worker.<sup>2</sup> Outsourced public service workers' pay has been progressively devalued and terms and conditions have been slashed. A true progressive public sector pay policy would boost the economy overall and raise the living standards of all public service workers.

2.4 It is a longstanding principle that Congress does not dictate the terms of individual pay claims, nor does it seek to bind the hands of our negotiators. Those are decisions that must remain in the hands of our members, branches, and the national committees that have contributed to this report. But after individual settlements are won, wholesale policy change is needed to make work better, and make sure that the attack on public sector workers' standard of living never happens again.

2.5 This report sets out GMB's case, and demands, for change.

## 3. Public sector pay since 2010

### Background

- 3.1 There was no democratic mandate for the attacks on public sector pay that were enforced after 2010. The Conservative Party manifesto of that year proposed only a one year pay freeze on increases ‘excluding the one million lowest paid workers.’<sup>3</sup> Instead, formal pay freezes and caps have been imposed on most public sector workers for eight out of the twelve years.

### **Westminster public sector pay policies, 2010 to the present**

| <u>Period</u>        | <u>Policy</u>  |
|----------------------|--|
| 2011/12 –<br>2012/13 | Two-year freeze, with an exemption for workers paid £21,000 or less who were allocated an increase of at least £250.                           |
| 2013/14 –<br>2017/18 | Pay awards capped at an average of 1 per cent across each bargaining group.  |
| 2018/19 –<br>2020/21 | Public sector pay cap lifted in response to union campaigning - however ‘catch up’ or restorative claims are resisted.                         |
| 2021/22              | Pay freeze imposed with limited exceptions for the NHS and workers paid below £24,000. Inflation reaches 11.1 per cent by the end of the year. |
| 2022/23              | No formal pay policy. Pay offers are significantly below inflation which reaches 14.2 per cent in October (RPI).                               |
| 2023/24              | Reported unofficial policy of limiting public sector pay increases to 5 per cent. <sup>4</sup>   |

- 3.2 Even in the years when pay has not been formally capped, most pay offers have been at, or below, inflation since 2010. The period of pay austerity started earlier in some parts of the public sector, such as local government employers covered by the National Joint Council (NJC), after the employers failed to make an offer in 2009/10.
- 3.3 While central Government has imposed pay constraints in the past, the absence of restorative awards since 2010 is unprecedented. As the former NHS Regulator (Monitor) said, historically: ‘periods of wage restraint are generally followed by periods of “catch up” with their trend level in subsequent years.’<sup>5</sup> The real wage cuts of the early 1970s were mostly reversed by the Clegg Commission’s recommendations of 1979/1980.<sup>6</sup> Even the public sector wage cuts during the Great Depression of the early 1930s were reversed within a couple of years.<sup>7</sup> But – uniquely in British political history – there has been no policy of restoration since the modern round of pay austerity was imposed.
- 3.4 The UK Government has, in part, enforced its central pay policies through its setting of civil service pay and the Pay Review Bodies (which are covered in more detail below). Despite Ministers’ claim that ‘central government has no role in setting pay awards for Local Authority workers,’<sup>8</sup> Local Government budgets in fact suffered additional cuts in a deliberate attempt to enforce central government pay policy.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.5 GMB estimated that between £4.6 billion and £5.2 billion was cut from local authority budgets as a consequence of central government pay policy between 2013/14 and 2019/20 alone. Funding was also cut from devolved nations’ budgets under the Barnett formula.
- 3.6 Civil service pay has generally remained tightly constrained by its proximity to the UK Treasury. The paradox of civil service pay setting is that it is both highly centralised and fragmented at the same time. Central pay bargaining in the civil service was abolished in the

mid1990s. In theory, the 'delegation' of pay bargaining to individual Departments was supposed to result in pay and grading that was:  
*'More flexible and more closely tailored to the needs of the organisation ... [and] attuned to individual circumstances and relevant labour markets.'*<sup>10</sup>

3.7 The opposite is now true. The pay and grading for comparable roles varies wildly by Department.  
Headline pay freezes and caps have been imposed rigidly but inconsistently, and without regard to private sector wage competition for particular roles. Even Michael Gove, as Cabinet Office Minister, admitted that 'trying to tackle some of the balkanisation of the process and pay, reward, recruitment and 7 so on ... is a very good thing'<sup>11</sup> – but Ministers have continued to resist a more unified approach.

3.8 The civil service has abandoned the old principle that pay rates should be competitive with comparable roles in the private sector.<sup>12</sup> In 2022 just 22 per cent of Ministry of Defence civil servants and 19 per cent of Legal Aid Agency workers said that their pay was 'reasonable' compared to people in comparable jobs in other organisations.<sup>13</sup> This loss of comparable pay rates is leading to acute recruitment and retention pressures. The Legal Aid Agency has admitted that:

*'We continue to have a number of outstanding vacancies as a result of external factors making recruitment and retention increasingly challenging ... we are unable to recruit, train, and retain sufficient levels of staff to meet an increasing demand to our services.'*<sup>14</sup>

3.9 The Environment Agency's (EA) own Chief Executive said last year that his organisation's pay rates were 'unjust, unwise, and unfair,' and warned that 'in line with government policy, EA employees have taken a series of real terms pay cuts, while working harder and harder .... we are now losing many of our critical people and are currently running a 10% vacancy rate across the organisation, with much higher vacancy levels in some of our most critical functions.'<sup>15</sup>

Congress notes that the GMB pay objectives for the 2023/24 civil service pay round, which covers the Ministry of Defence and other employers, state that:

*'The fracturing of civil service pay bargaining has also led to a merry go round of staff moving from one Department to another in the same evaluated grade for increases in pay without the need to seek a promotion and take on additional responsibility. Those Departments not paying the perceived "rate for the job" suffer significant problems with recruitment and retention.'*

3.10 The extent of the devaluation of public sector pay varies by employer and bargaining group, but a broad picture is clear. Almost all grades have been devalued over time. The only exceptions were in some of the lowest paid roles, which have been the focus of 'bottom-loaded' pay settlements. Even these roles had only kept parity with inflation, and this was before the dramatic increase in living costs in 2022/23.

3.11 The below graph shows two comparable examples: a long-serving Band 4 NHS worker in England (such as an assistant practitioner), and a worker on the NJC local government spinal column point 17 (such as some grades of teaching assistant).

3.12 These workers' pay was devalued by **21 per cent to 22 per cent** between 2009/10 and 2022/23 when measured against the RPI, the trade union preferred measure of inflation. Even when measured against the Government's preferred inflation measure – the CPI – the real-terms losses were between **11 per cent and 12 per cent**.



- 3.13 As described in previous Congress reports and debates, the cuts in pay have been compounded by the devaluation of pensions (particularly following the Hutton Review), cuts in resources, the experience of working during the pandemic, and a huge growth in demand. Public services are at breaking point. **We call on the Government to commit to a policy of fully-funded, restorative pay increases.**
- 3.14 Public sector pay constraints are a transparent attempt to balance the national accounts off the back of public service workers. A number of additional arguments have been put forward in support of the policy. GMB believes that these arguments have no merit – but they must be addressed as the claims continue to be repeated by some politicians and media outlets.

#### A 'pay premium'

- 3.15 It was often claimed in the early 2010s that there was a 'public sector pay premium.' This argument is still repeated in a watered-down form by the Government and right-wing opponents of investment in public services.<sup>16</sup>
- 3.16 The alleged 'premium' fails to take into account the differences between jobs in the public and private sectors, which has been further distorted over recent decades by the outsourcing of lowerpaid jobs.
- 3.17 The ONS estimated that when workers were assessed on a comparable basis in 2019, average public sector wages were 3 per cent lower than equivalent private sector rates when bonuses were included.<sup>17</sup> The analysis has not been repeated since 2020, but the gap will only have widened as private sector settlements have outstripped the public sector in 2020 – 2022.

#### Impact on inflation

- 3.18 It has also been claimed that higher public sector pay settlements would lead to higher inflation. The evidence to support this claim is threadbare<sup>18</sup> and the argument has been dismissed in the past.<sup>19</sup> The argument does not stand up to scrutiny. Inflation increased rapidly when public sector settlements were low. The main causes of higher inflation are international in their origin – supply chain disruption and trade friction, higher European energy prices, and Russia's war against Ukraine.
- 3.19 As a recent Incomes Data Research report for our sister union the FDA noted:
- 3.20 *'Inflation cannot be caused directly by public sector wage rises but neither is there any evidence that this can occur indirectly, for instance by the public sector influencing private sector outcomes.'*<sup>20</sup>
- 3.21 Holding down public sector pay does nothing to remedy the main reasons for high inflation but it does mean that 5.8 million workers are spending less in their communities. This lost spending denies local economies a wider multiplier effect that supports private sector jobs. IPPR analysis for GMB has found that for every pound spent on public sector pay, more than 40p is returned to the Treasury in wages tax and lower social security payments.<sup>21</sup>

*'Public sector workers don't cause inflation: their wages lag the private sector's. The problem for HMG [His Majesty's Government] and its workers is that its public finance strategy rests on imposing the biggest real wage cuts in living memory.'*<sup>22</sup>

Nick Macpherson, former Permanent Secretary to the Treasury (2005 to 2016), 11 December 2022

## The independence of the Pay Review Bodies

- 3.22 39 per cent of public sector workers' pay is set under the Pay Review Body process. By far the largest Pay Review Body (PRB) remit is for the NHS, which covers some 1.4 million workers across the UK and an annual paybill of £56 billion.<sup>23</sup> The NHS PRB is the review body that most directly affects our members.
- 3.23 In theory, the Pay Review Bodies provide independent advice and recommendations to Ministers on the basis of the needs of the service and an objective review of the evidence. In practice, the PRB process has been critically undermined since 2010.
- 3.24 Every NHS PRB recommendation since has been in line with central pay policy and below RPI inflation - with devastating consequences for our members. Ministers have hidden behind the Pay Review Body, which has been abused and discredited.<sup>24</sup> That is why GMB's national NHS and ambulance committees decided in December 2022 to suspend our participation in the PRB process until they are reformed.
- 3.25 There are fundamental problems with the Pay Review Body process. Government Ministers:
- Set the Review Bodies' annual remits - including the financial limits within which they are expected to work;<sup>25</sup> and
  - Appoint and remunerate the Pay Review Body's chairs and members - unions have no role in this process, and appointments have increasingly been dominated by people from employer backgrounds.
- 3.26 The effective control of the Government over the Pay Review Body process is confirmed by an internal Office of Manpower Economics (OME) document. The OME provides the secretariat to the pay Review Bodies. A 2022 OME efficiency review stated that: 'The work of the PRBs is demand led and essentially non-negotiable – departments set remits and timetables.'<sup>26</sup>
- 3.27 The Treasury has told the Pay Review Bodies in the past that it would not fund pay increases above set limits - which were between 0% and 1% from 2010 to 2018. The Pay Review Bodies showed limited willingness to challenge wider Government pay policy even as workers' real-terms losses mounted. Every single one of the NHS Pay Review Body's post-2010 recommendations was below RPI inflation.
- 3.28 Nor is it true that Ministers themselves have 'respected' the Pay Review Bodies recommendations. When Jeremy Hunt was Health Secretary, he rejected a recommendation for a 1% increase, on the grounds that it was 'unaffordable.'<sup>27</sup> In recent years, Ministers have been consistently late in their submission of remit letters and evidence, leading to delays in payments as recommendations were not delivered by April. And Michael Gove abolished the School Support Staff Negotiating Body – which is of critical importance to GMB – in 2010.
- 3.29 It was not always this way. The Pay Review Body process once generally delivered pay increases above inflation. Higher pay increases were secured in the NHS for workers covered by the Pay Review Body during the 1980s than those whose pay fell under the old Whitley Council System. The ambulance unions had come to support the idea of a Pay Review Body process by the time of the 1989-1990 national ambulance strike, after years of real-terms cuts outside of it. The main complaint during these years was the periodic 'staging' of settlements: when implementation of the full recommendation was delayed until later in the year.
- 3.30 The evidence shows that the Pay Review Bodies were once seen within Government as being independent enough to make aboveinflation recommendations against Ministers' wishes.<sup>28</sup> The trade union side did secure an important recommendation against the introduction of

regionalised public sector pay, in 2012.<sup>29</sup> In line with long established Congress policy, GMB continues to oppose regional public sector pay policies.

- 3.31 But the figures are stark – a whole generation of NHS workers have been denied above-inflation pay rises under the Pay Review Body.<sup>1</sup> The NHS PRB's recommendations have been even more constricted than during past recessions and periods of central government pay restrictions.

<sup>1</sup> The figures shown in the graph below are for the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine (1984 to 2007), which became the NHS Pay Review Body.

Data sources are: PRB annual reports; Parliamentary Answer to Written Question 125276 (23 April 2007); Parliamentary Answer to Written Question 165781 (17 July 2013); Parliamentary Answer to Written Question 175756 (13 April 2023); ONS Consumer Price Inflation timeseries data; Bank of England Millennium of Macroeconomic Data.

CPI rates from before 1996 are estimated retrospectively.

- 3.32 The start of the path that led to the loss of Pay Review Body independence can be traced to the late 1990s, when fundamental changes were made to their terms of reference. Before this point, the Review Body remit in the NHS was simple: 'to advise the Prime Minister on the remuneration of staff covered by the body.'<sup>30</sup>
- 3.33 Official papers reveal that by the late 1990s:  
*'The Treasury want[ed] to toughen up the remits of the PRBS. They see these as too flabby at the moment, and insufficiently referenced to the wider objectives of departmental policy. This is much more controversial – because of the independence of the PRBS, and because of the signals it sends about the way we want to 'rig' pay awards.'*<sup>31</sup>
- 3.34 The terms of reference for the Review Body were then amended to require it to take account of 'the funds available to the Health Departments as set out in the Government's Departmental Expenditure Limits [and] the Government's inflation target.'<sup>32</sup> Unions warned at the time that the changes threatened the independence of the review body process.<sup>33</sup>
- 3.35 One specific concern was raised: that Ministers could impose a hard ceiling on future pay awards (and instruct the Review Bodies not to make recommendations above a fixed percentage). However, the Government gave an assurance that this would not happen.<sup>34</sup> Pay settlements were then generally above inflation in subsequent years. But the changes to the system made the future assault on public sector wages easier to achieve.
- 3.36 Policy analysis sometimes identifies a 'lethal mutation' – an idea or change that becomes so extensively modified through later circumstances and its implementation that it actively harms its original purpose. In the case of public sector pay, the toxic combination of post 2010 ideological-driven austerity and the tighter terms of reference produced a lethal mutation.
- 3.37 Public sector pay cuts are ultimately politically determined. But the Pay Review Bodies have not displayed the genuine independence that once existed. Serious reform is urgently needed. The decision on whether to participate in the Pay Review Body process will always be a matter for our NHS lay democratic structures. Ultimately, it will be for those structures to determine whether any reforms are substantial enough to resume our participation.
- 3.38 But as we approach the next general election, our political demands for reform could include:  
• **A reformed appointments structure with a formal role for unions during the appointments process;**

- **Reform of the Pay Review Body's Terms of Reference to give them real independence and the authority to make recommendations on the basis of the needs of the NHS and its workforce, and to not be constrained by central Government pay policy;**
- **Binding timetables so that Ministers cannot simply delay the process by being late to submit evidence. If evidence is late then the Review Body should simply attach less weight to the Government's arguments. This could be underpinned by legislation.**

### Outsourced workers

- 3.39 The pace of outsourcing has increased significantly since 2010, and many of these workers have been removed from national bargaining. The Coalition Government even amended the TUPE regulations to exclude outsourced workers from benefits that were achieved through the national negotiations that they were previously covered by.
- 3.40 As discussed in previous Congress reports and statements, it is well established that outsourcing reduces costs by squeezing pay, and terms and conditions. Jobs performed by women, and Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority workers, are all more likely to be outsourced. There are no reliable estimates of how many outsourced public service workers there are in the UK.<sup>35</sup> Outsourcing also critically undermines the integrity of national agreements such as Agenda for Change.
- 3.41 Unions once had a powerful tool to prevent wage exploitation through the Fair Wages Resolution, which provided that when a Government contract was awarded:  
*'The contractor shall pay rates of wages and observe hours and conditions of labour not less favourable than those established for the trade or industry'[as determined in the first instance through collective bargaining]'*<sup>36</sup>
- 3.42 The Fair Wages Resolution gave a clear incentive to employers to enter into collective bargaining arrangements. Unions could enforce the rule by taking cases to the Central Arbitration Committee. Although the rule applied to central Government contracts, 'in practice most nationalised industries and public corporations include some form of fair wages clause in their contracts.'<sup>37</sup>
- 3.43 The Attlee Government's version of the Fair Wages Resolution formed the basis for the International Labour Organisation's Convention 94 on Labour Clauses (Public Contracts). More than sixty nations now subscribe to the principle that contracted out services should not pay lower wages, nor offer inferior terms and conditions - including in comparable European nations such as France, Italy, and Spain. But the UK, the state that created the principle as long ago as the 1890s, is the only nation that has walked away from the Convention (under Margaret Thatcher).
- 3.44 A modern form of the Fair Wages principle was contained in the Two-Tier Code, which was established under the last UK Labour Government and was in force between 2005 and 2010. The code provided that outsourced workers' pay should remain 'no less favourable'<sup>38</sup> than those directly employed, including for workers employed by the contractor after the transfer date. The Code also contained a disputes procedure.
- 3.45 The Two-Tier Code was not perfect – it was only ever a voluntary measure, and it was not in force for long enough to make the difference that had been hoped.
- 3.46 However, we welcome the fact that the Welsh Labour Government has carried forward the Two-Tier Code in Wales,<sup>39</sup> and also its plans to strengthen the Code through the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill. We welcome also the UK Labour Party's commitment to 'reinstate and strengthen the Two-Tier Code, created by the last Labour

Government and scrapped by the Tories, to end the scandal of outsourced workers getting second class pay and conditions.<sup>140</sup>

- 3.47 **Congress calls on the next UK Labour Government to implement its commitment to restore the Two-Tier Code. Its commitment to strengthening the code should include a modern version of the Fair Wages Resolution and embracing the international standards that are one of the proud accomplishments of the UK labour movement.**
- 3.48 Congress has debated many times the importance of standards over pay, terms and conditions in schools.
- 3.49 Unlike teachers' pay, the pay spine for most school support staff in England is set by through the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC). The abolition of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB), and the extension of inadequately resourced term-time only contracts, has had a devastating impact on our members in schools. The average teaching assistant's pay in 2022 was £14,050 a year.**41 Restoration of the SSSNB remains a top political priority for GMB.**

#### 4. Pay cuts – the effect on workers and services

- 4.1 According to our members, public sector pay cuts are having a devastating impact on workers and everyone who relies on public services.
- 4.2 Public sector pay constraints fall hardest on women. Almost two thirds of public sector workers are women – rising to more than 90 per cent of teaching assistants. Women and people in low-income households are also more likely to rely on essential public services. As the Women's Budget Group has argued, cuts to public sector pay and public services are gendered issues.<sup>42</sup>

##### UK public sector workforce gender breakdown<sup>43</sup>

| Type of employer  | Percentage women workers |
|---|--------------------------|
| Public sector (other)   | 75.8                     |
| A health authority or NHS Trust   | 75                       |
| Local government or council<br>(including fire services and local                     | 62.4                     |
| authority-controlled schools/colleges)  |                          |
| <b>Public sector (overall)</b>  | <b>61.9</b>              |
| A university, or other grant<br>funded establishment (including<br>opted-out schools) | 56.8                     |
| Central government or<br>civil service  | 49.8                     |
| Nationalised industry / state<br>corporation  | 37.7                     |

- 4.3 The underfunding of public services – and the imposition of ceilings on settlements – has helped to freeze discriminatory pay policies in place. The full-time gender pay gap has fallen in the private sector, but – shockingly – it has grown in the public sector.<sup>44</sup>
- 4.4 GMB is fighting back against historic and current injustices. As discussed in the 2022 CEC Special Report on the Women’s Campaign Unit, the systematic underfunding of local government has put pressure on Single Status agreements. Through the National and Region Women’s Campaign Units, GMB has launched major equal pay campaigns and built the union in local authorities that include Birmingham, Glasgow, and Dundee. **GMB is calling for the provision of new central funding to redress historic equal pay claims.**
- 4.5 Public sector pay cuts are denying millions of workers the recognition and dignity that should be an automatic part of public service. According our members:
- According to a 2022 GMB survey of more than a thousand public sector workers, **36 per cent** of members had to borrow money to cover essentials from banks, payday lenders, or family and friends in the previous six months.
  - Under a quarter (**24 per cent**) of public sector members who responded to the same survey said that they could afford necessities for themselves each month.
  - **One in three** school support staff workers in London have considered using a food bank.<sup>45</sup>
- 4.6 One recent survey of employers found that almost half (46 per cent) of NHS trusts have either created a food bank for their own staff, or they are in the process of setting one up.<sup>46</sup>
- 4.7 New GMB analysis reveals that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of public sector workers whose wages are supported by the social security system. The number of public sector workers in receipt of Universal Credit across the UK increased by 155 per cent between 2019 and 2022.

Public sector workers in receipt of Universal Credit (estimated)<sup>47</sup>  
October-December 2019 and October-December 2022

| Nation / English Region        | 2019        | 2022        | Increase (n)        | Increase (%)        |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| North East                     | 7,595       | 12,032      | 4,437               | 58.4                |
| North West                     | 7,654       | 17,586      | 9,932               | 129.8               |
| Yorkshire and Humberside       | 4,887       | 15,747      | 10,860              | 222.2               |
| East Midlands                  | 4,977       | 25,838      | 20,861              | 419.1               |
| West Midlands                  | 2,655       | 11,054      | 8,399               | 316.3               |
| East of England                | 11,690      | 26,252      | 14,562              | 124.6               |
| London                         | 6,631       | 19,159      | 12,528              | 188.9               |
| South East                     | 15,667      | 23,212      | 7,545               | 48.2                |
| South West                     | 6,486       | 17,167      | 10,681              | 164.7               |
| Wales                          | 2,162       | 5,772       | 3,610               | 167.0               |
| Scotland                       | 5,295       | 13,639      | 8,344               | 157.6               |
| <b>Nation / English Region</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>Increase (n)</b> | <b>Increase (%)</b> |
| Northern Ireland               | 1,104       | 8,314       | 7,210               | 653.1               |
| United Kingdom                 | 76,803      | 195,772     | 118,969             | 154.9               |

- 4.8 The impact of public sector pay cuts is felt beyond the 5.8 million people who are directly employed. The Government’s own impact assessment warned that its pay policy would force

children into poverty. The Treasury's impact assessment – which was obtained by GMB under the Freedom of Information Act – warned that:

*'[Pay constraints] could increase financial pressure on families of public sector workers, which may have a negative impact on family relationships. ... This policy will make it more difficult for low income families with children to access essential goods, and will therefore make it harder for the government to hit the Child Poverty Act targets.'*<sup>48</sup>

- 4.9 Pay cuts, rising demand, and the experience of providing essential services during the pandemic have had a profound and negative effect on many public sector workers' mental health. This is compounded by the comparably higher rates of overtime working in public services.<sup>49</sup> The mental health charity Mind has warned that 'workplace wellbeing support is worse in the public sector than in the private sector.'<sup>50</sup>
- 4.10 Years of underfunding and real-terms wage cuts are affecting all those who rely on public services. According to the latest figures:
- There are 124,000 vacancies in the NHS in England alone – up by 24 per cent compared to before the pandemic.<sup>51</sup>
  - Across the UK, the number of vacancies in education has increased by 43 per cent compared to before the pandemic, and schools are struggling to fill posts.<sup>52</sup> At one point in 2020, teaching assistants were the highest shortage occupation in the country – second only to HGV drivers.<sup>53</sup>
  - The Local Government Association has warned that 'we have a crisis of recruitment in local government and so, as night follows day, we have a crisis in capacity.'<sup>54</sup>
  - The National Police Chief's Council warned in February 2023 that rising police staff vacancy rates were putting the Government's commitment to raise officer numbers at risk.<sup>55</sup> Some districts have police staff vacancies of 33 per cent.<sup>56</sup>
  - The Legal Aid Agency has said that 'we are unable to recruit, train, and retain sufficient levels of staff to meet an increasing demand to our services.'<sup>57</sup>
  - The Environment Agency is reportedly unable to carry all its statutory functions at time of unprecedented climate challenges.<sup>58</sup> The EA's Chief Executive has said that:  
*'Because of the growing gap ... [with] private sector salaries, we are now losing many of our critical people and are currently running a 10% vacancy rate across the organisation, with much higher vacancy levels in some of our most critical functions. That is already impacting our ability to deliver.'*<sup>59</sup>
- 4.11 GMB has collected evidence which demonstrates beyond doubt that high turnover and vacancy rates in the NHS are putting patients in harm's way.
- 4.12 According to internal Trust papers, West Midlands Ambulance Service's Board were warned in early 2023 that 'the turnover of front line road staff has nearly doubled over the last year ... [we are] now reaching our limit to recruit new paramedics ... [and] reducing turnover will be of paramount importance if the current clinical model is to be sustained.'<sup>60</sup>
- 4.13 South Central Ambulance Service said in January that the erosion of ambulance workers' real pay is a significant contributing factor to 'a large volume of vacancies across the Trust, including in the EOC [Emergency Operations Centre] and 111 areas ... with the on-going cost of living crisis reducing the value of pay increases and reducing the competitiveness of the roles within the market.' The frontline 23 attrition rate has more than doubled at the Trust.<sup>61</sup>

- 4.14 Cuts to public sector pay are a false economy. The cost of rebuilding our public services is rising exponentially as waiting lists grow, and knowledge and expertise are lost. As the Bank of England's former Head of Monetary Strategy has said:

*'There is a huge macroeconomic case for sorting out the NHS ... If the money can whittle away at that .... the net benefits could be very large indeed.'*<sup>62</sup>

- 4.15 The same logic applies across our public services. **We call for immediate and substantial investment in public sector pay as part of the wider programme to rebuild our essential public services.**

## 5. GMB – Making Work Better

- 5.1 Pressure on public sector workers has been building for years. The dam burst in 2022/23. The Government's policies proved to be completely unequal to the cost of living crisis, and Ministers refused to recognise the scale of the challenge.
- 5.2 At the time of writing, GMB members are in dispute across large parts of the public sector. We express our solidarity with all our members who have taken industrial action in defence of their pay and jobs. Congress does not determine our members' approach to collective bargaining, but it is important to recognise and stand with our members' actions and claims.
- 5.3 In the NHS, our members joined the first full-scale national ambulance strike in more than thirty years. As GMB told the Parliamentary Select Committee, the strike came against a backdrop of severe real-terms cuts in basic pay, underfunding, overwork, an increase in violence, and cuts to the cash value of unsociable hours payments.<sup>63</sup>

[INSERT PHOTO]

*GMB ambulance members on the picket line, February 2023*<sup>64</sup>

- 5.4 Conservative Ministers shamelessly accused ambulance workers of putting patient safety at risk – even though a GMB Freedom of Information request revealed that recorded patient deaths during ambulance transit doubled in 2021/22 when there were no strikes.<sup>65</sup> Our analysis showed the derogations (emergency cover arrangements) negotiated with trusts were so comprehensive that delays actually fell on strike days.

[INSERT GRAPH]

- 5.5 The Government's pay offer for 2023/24 has been accepted by GMB members and by a majority of health unions. Weeks were wasted while Ministers stubbornly refused GMB's demand that they 'Talk Pay Now.' The fact that Ministers were forced to the negotiating table, after months of denying that they could intervene, is a testament to our members' bravery and determination.
- 5.6 Separate to the NHS Agenda for Change negotiations, Ministers gave a commitment to examine the case for a separate pay spine for nursing staff. GMB recognises that NHS pay structures before Agenda for Change were fragmented and subject to widespread pay injustices, and that women and Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority workers were systematically underpaid. We reiterate longstanding GMB policy against Government actions that threaten the integrity of our national agreements.
- 5.7 Campaigning and organising across the ambulance service resulted in London Region securing recognition at the East of England Ambulance Service. The campaign at Liverpool Royal and Broadgreen Hospital to bring cleaning, hotel and portering services back in house



resulted in more than 670 staff transferring back into direct NHS employment and onto Agenda for Change contracts with improvements to conditions of employment and pay. Multiple campaigns very similar to this are being run right across the Southern Region and they are bringing into the union many new activists.

- 5.8 The latest NJC offer for local government services has been rejected by GMB members and plans for industrial action ballots are now being considered. GMB members in refuse services have secured substantial increases through industrial action in the last year alone, from Sandwell to Ashford and the Isle of Wight and Chesterfield and many other councils.
- 5.9 Following on from last year's NJC pay award, a dispute was won across London Councils that secured a deletion of spinal column points and led to members receiving increases in pay. In Leeds, a dispute involving members working as Casual Diving and Swimming Coaches resulted in some members securing a £5 per hour increase, secure permanent contracts, access to NJC pay uplifts each year, and access to the local government pension scheme.
- 5.10 GMB's campaigns against school closures, like those proposed at Queensway Primary School in Leeds, resulted in schools staying open and members keeping their jobs. The campaign against cuts to school support staff pay and conditions at Springwood Primary School in the North West resulted in the cuts not happening and also successful regrades for members.
- 5.11 In Cumbria, job evaluation campaigns in local government resulted in significant improvements in pay for certain parts of the workforce and an equal pay campaign is now underway. Equal pay campaigns in Birmingham and Coventry are seeing huge increases in member numbers and engagement. A campaign against fire and rehire in Wiltshire County Council resulted in Civil Service Enforcement Officers keeping their unsocial hours payments, and in Merton & Sutton Council, recognition was secured at ID Verde where it had previously been lost.
- 5.12 Public sector pay setting is a devolved matter, and it is for the relevant Regions in GMB to lead the industrial response. However, we recognise that Westminster budget cuts have had an effect on funding, including (in particular) when pay settlements have been funded within existing budgets, which denies funding increases under the Barnett formula.
- 5.13 As GMB Scotland recently told the STUC, in many public sector pay negotiations – most notably with COSLA in local government and the Scottish Government in the National Health Service and Scottish Ambulance Service – a failure of political leadership has led to pay negotiations lasting longer than they needed to, leaving public sector workers without the much needed pay rises they deserve and placing uncertainty on the ability of workers to pay their bills.
- 5.14 GMB has therefore called on the Scottish Government to develop a national public sector pay strategy in cooperation with 16 trade unions which will ensure pay offers are timely, coherent, address the recruitment and retention crises in health and social care, and value workers across Scotland.<sup>66</sup>
- 5.15 Campaigns across GMB Scotland have seen significant wins for members. The prospect of industrial action across local government secured another £1.4 billion towards a further settlement for equal pay in Glasgow. Over 30 mandates for industrial action were secured across 32 councils by conducting targeted ballots, which secured improvements on pay offers.
- 5.16 Action in waste and street cleansing during Edinburgh's International Festival, supported by waste workers across Scotland, including Glasgow, Aberdeen, West Lothian and the Orkney Islands, brought the First Minister to negotiations with an improved offer that was accepted by members. Industrial action plans across multiple health boards and the Scottish Ambulance Service secured two pay increases between 2022-24, adding more than £1 billion to the pay of

NHS workers in Scotland. GMB specifically secured more than £80 million in a one-off payment to prevent industrial action.

- 5.17 In Northern Ireland, important decisions on public sector pay and pensions have been delayed, or imposed without due accountability, due to the lack of a functioning Executive.<sup>67</sup> GMB represents Northern Ireland Civil Service workers in the Road Service, the Rivers Agency, the Forestry Service Northern Ireland, as well as the Environment. Civil service members voted in March 2023 to take action against the Northern Ireland Civil Service pay offer of just 2 per cent.<sup>68</sup> Last year, following local rejection of the NJC pay offer, claims were submitted under part three of the Green Book which have secured incremental pay increases, harmonisation of terms and conditions and cost of living payments of at least £500. As a result of these campaigns we saw a significant increase in ballot turnout in the recent NJC pay ballot.
- 5.18 We recognise that the Welsh Government has adopted a social partnership approach to industrial relations, which has been supported by GMB. Our NHS members in the Welsh Ambulance Service took industrial action to secure an improved offer from that in England. An improved offer has been achieved through negotiation, which – at the time of writing – is out to ballot with our members.
- 5.19 Congress stands with our Public Services members across the United Kingdom in their fight for the pay and investment in the service that they deserve, and that all those who rely on public services need.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The UK could not function without its public services. Our public services are not a drain on the economy – they are the foundation of the economy. The degradation of public service workers' pay and conditions since 2010 are an attack on all of us.
- 6.2 Public sector pay has been eroded over many years. The consequences will be felt for many years to come. But as the challenges facing public services mount, there is no time to waste. The policies that led us to breaking point must be reversed now.
- 6.3 This report sets out GMB's case – and demands – for change.

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JUNE MINNERY (CEC): President, proud to be moving this Special Report on Public Sector Pay. Congress, in every part of the UK public service workers are under attack. From the council and NHS workers whose pay has been cut by nearly a quarter in real terms, to outsourced public service workers who have been cut out of the national agreements and some of the most basic protections at work. The staff, civil servants, environment agency workers, and skilled support staff have been run into the ground. While our members were in the grip of the worst pay freeze in living memory, Tory ministers had the nerve to call our members a threat to public safety. How dare they, Congress. Our members are not affecting the safety net, our members are the safety net. (*Applause*) We are proud to represent every single one of them.

If ministers think they can hide behind the pay review bodies or slander our members, they have another think coming. I tell you this, GMB is fighting back. From the picket lines to parliament, to the refuse workers disputes, to the first national ambulance strike in more than 30 years, it is SGMB that is making the weather. When ministers refused to negotiate it was our members who forced them to the table with one simple demand, to talk pay now. There are no easy battles and we all know that there are many battles ahead. We are fighting not just for our members' livelihoods, we are fighting for the decent public services that almost everyone relies on. As this report sets out, the crisis in hospital backlogs, the crisis in crime prevention, or ambulance delays, or special educational needs provision, these are also things of one crisis, the crisis of pay.

Congress, we know that two out of every three public sector workers are women, in the lowest paid occupations it is more than 90%/ Public sector pay cuts hit women the hardest and we reject utterly politics that refuses to pay our women members their worth. So we need to send a united message to politicians of all parties, the UK can no longer balance the books off the back of public service workers. There can be no solution to the public anger over disappearing services until the recruitment and retention crisis is resolved. Congress, this report is not about determining our pay claims, or dictating the machinery for bargaining, most decisions will be always be taken by our members through our sector democratic structures. It is about setting our demands of government policy. As this report sets out, we are fighting for newly founded restorative pay policies to redress the years of cuts in pay, an end to the fragmentation of civil service pay bargaining; central funding to set off historic equal pay cases; restoration of the skilled support staff negotiating body in England, and real reforms of the pay review body.

Congress, the acid test will always be where our members can place real trust in the independence of that process. Congress, as the report says, public sector pay has been awarded over many years. The consequences will be felt for many years to come but as the challenges face public services now there is no time to waste. The policies that led us to breaking point must be reversed now. That is what the report is about; it sets out a serious and credible case for change to make work better. We know that carrying arguments in this hall is not enough. We must fight for them too so please support the report. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, June. Arron?

ARRON BEVAN-JOHN (CEC): Congress, police staff are sometimes a forgotten part of the public sector. The Westminster government pledged to restore police officer numbers but they said nothing about the 18,000 police staff posts that have been cut in England and Wales since 2010. Our pay and allowances have increased by 21% since 2011 and inflation has been more than 50%. In some areas a third of posts for critical and underpaid roles like 999 call handlers represented by the GMB are vacant. For us the cost-of-living-crisis is something that we have been living with for more than a decade and last year's spike in prices is pushing low paid workers over the edge. Our public service workers are driven into debt and using food banks to make ends meet. Half of all NHS trusts, half, have set up food banks for their own workers or are in the process of doing so. As this report by the CEC shows, the number of public sector workers on Universal Credit is up by 150% in just the last two years.

There is no other word for it other than it is a disgrace, but we are at a critical moment. We face the Minimum Service Level Bill in parliament, a further assault on public sector union rights is promised. This time next year we could be in the grip of a general election. Now is the time, Congress, we need to make sure that our members' pay is on the ballot paper. This report is not just an agenda for new policies, it is a request for a mandate. I ask you this, give us your backing for the campaign to negotiations ahead. Let's make sure none of our public service members are left behind, including those who have been outsourced. Let's win for our members and let's make sure that the unprecedented attacks on public sector pay since the financial crash can never happen again. Congress, please support this report. Thank you. (*Applause*)



THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Arron. Regions are now invited to speak on this report. As I said before, I am going in reverse alphabetical order, so I am starting with Wales and the South West, please, to respond to the report.

MARK BOWLER (Wales & South West): Public pay is in the midst of the biggest squeeze in our history. Not since the 1930s have things been this bad. Real wages are lower than they were 15 years ago with the Tories unwilling to roll back from their plans for a low wage, insecure economy, where the rich flourish and everyone else of us loses. We are now a country that has the lowest GDP per head than any country in Europe save Lithuania. The poorest 20% in Britain are poorer than the poorest 20% in Poland; that is a sad indictment and just not good enough. We welcome the report calls for pay restoration. Just recently in Wales we had the Welsh Government and the ambulance staff to commit to pay restoration. It took hard work and effort but that change will make some difference to ambulance staff feeling the squeeze in the cost-of-living-crisis thrown up by the Tories ongoing rabid economic policies that have pushed Britain to the brink of despair.

This Government has failed to tackle inflation and there is little evidence that public sector pay cuts have done anything to keep the economy afloat. We need a government that respects and rewards our public servants and one that will oversee a growing economy and having listened to our special guest this morning I think I know which government that is. We also agree with the proposals to reform the public review bodies. These organisations have been used as a mask to cover Tory cuts for over a decade. Any attempt to call them impartial is as discredited as the organisations are themselves. These boards who had jurisdiction is set by the Secretary of State and are used as a shield to implement failed Tory orthodoxy. They need to be freed up from the dead hand of Tory ministers and allowed to be truly independent of the Treasury, with binding timetables so that the Government cannot time out submissions. It is time for public pay to be prioritised after a decade of real cuts, and for public servants to get the pay that they once had. We also welcome the commitment to call on the next UK Labour government to implement its commitment to restore the two-tier code, a necessary step to tackle low pay. These measures alongside others in this report will do so much to change the story for those working in the public sector. After a decade of Tory cuts Britain needs a pay rise and public sector workers need the pay restored. Wales and South West supports this report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mark. Thank you. Southern?



KATHY KETTELL (Southern): GMB members in the public sector are subject to low pay across local government, NHS, Civil Service, Environment Agency, civilian police workers, and more. For 13 years pay has been depressed and a combination of real term pay decline and a severe cost-of-living-crisis is now a catastrophe. This is even worse for those at the lower end of the public sector. Many of our members' pay has slipped below the living wage and differentials at the bottom of the pay spines have been eroded. Southern region has a large membership in privatised public services. In my branch many of these outsourced workers are disproportionately women and people of colour. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of casual workers in the public sector and often those workers are most disadvantaged. Social care is also riddled with poor practices, as we know, and employers are exploiting workers, taking advantage, driving down pay and terms and conditions to boost their own profits. We need public sector organisation to ensure that not only directly employed staff who receive the living wage but also those providing contracted out services. The living wage should merely be a starting point for negotiation. Where they refuse to do this we need to target the council or the NHS and their contractors, they must not be allowed to outsource their responsibilities for these workers. Where existing contracts are in place councils must immediately provide supplementary management until poverty wages are ended.

GMB will continue to support workers who go on strike to improve their conditions. Our region has run a number of these disputes and only last week we settled a dispute with Westminster Council contractors, NSL, with a 19% pay rise and other additional payments. (*Applause*) To those strikers we congratulate you and salute your determination and solidarity. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kathy. GMB Scotland.

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): GMB has been wining for our public sector workers up and down these islands. In many centres public sector workers have been the tip of the spear in fighting the austerity imposed on us by governments of all colours. In Scotland we face not one but two governments inflicting austerity on our public services. We have the Tories putting Scotland blocked grants from London and the SNP passing even more cuts onto Scottish services, especially to those working in local government where cuts on local services have been magnified. Public sector workers are paying the price but day in, day out, we turn up and we

keep our services going. The services like those who work in them are running on fumes.

Our NHS and social care sector, for example, are in the midst of a recruitment and retention crisis due to underpay and overwork. We cannot cut our way out of a crisis and we cannot have a recovery in our NHS without a recovery in social care. That starts with a £15 an hour minimum for social carers. (*Applause*) We have taken on the challenge not just for our own sake but to protect our public services for the generations to come who will work, who will use them, and who will need them. We will not allow the slow march of privatisation of our services and the low pay and precarious work that comes with it.

In Scotland the Scottish Government set out a public sector pay strategy with a ceiling of 5%. Scottish councils offered our members 5.5%. In just weeks we smashed their strategy, after 94% of our members rejected the offer. Council workers know that neither 5% nor 5.5% are good enough. This is not an offer that reflects the title of "Covid heroes" in the midst of a cost-of-living-crisis. Our members made that loud and clear and we are now moving to ballot over 8,000 of our members in schools on industrial action. This story is one known to trade unionists across the UK. No political leadership, no plan for our public services, and no care for those who work in them or use them, but it is trade unions that are providing leadership and taking on austerity. Trade unions have a plan for our services and we care for our public sector workers and know how integral they are to the fabric of our society. Most importantly, trade unions are fighting and we are winning. GMB Scotland supports this report. (*Applause*)

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

MICHAEL TURNBULL (North West & Irish): Public sector workers are the backbone of our society. Our members work tirelessly day in, day out, to provide essential services that keep our communities safe, our family and friends healthy, and our children educated. The North West & Irish Region welcomes this report. However, we need to ensure that there is parity when it comes to the four nations. There are significant differences in public policy and funding across the four nations. The lack of parity not only creates inequalities but also undermines unity in the UK. The Government needs to work with devolved governments to ensure that all citizens have access to the same level of support and services. We also know about current thresholds where minimum service bills are creating a situation where workers pay is being hamstrung. These thresholds are designed to

ensure that workers receive a minimum level of pay but they also have the effect of limiting pay increases for longer term employees.

Members in this situation may not see significant pay increases regardless of their performance, training, or experience, that they bring. These workers will feel undervalued and demotivated which impact the equality of services provided. Furthermore, these thresholds do not take into account the cost of living resulting in public sector workers' pay falling behind inflation rates effectively causing our public sector workers' pay to decrease over time. Public sector pay is a crucial issue that requires urgent attention. It is time for the UK government to take bold steps and provide fair and competitive salaries to public sector employees. Let us work towards creating a society where all employees are valued and respected for their contributions. Congress, I applaud and welcome this report.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Well done, Michael. NE, Yorkshire & Humber?

IAN BALL (NE, Yorkshire & Humber): First-time delegate, first-time speaker.  
(Applause) Brothers, sisters, comrades, I will not attempt to cover everything in this report but as a public sector worker and myself married to a TA I do, of course, welcome this report, a report that does not simply attempt to cover the obvious, our ever plummeting standards of living, the failure of government to value, understand, or even recognise us for what we do, the failing negotiating frameworks they expect us to take seriously and, dare I say it, the abuse, sexism, and racism, that we see thrown at us from politicians, from town halls to parliament, and not even restricted to the usual Tories we expect that from.

Congress, I want to pick out just a couple of highlights in this report that could make a real difference to our lives and make work better for us in the public sector. I will start with one that we already have. I commend this union and the fact that they have walked away from at least one of the so-called consultation frameworks. The NHS Pay Review Body is anything but. It is a quango for gaffers to kiss the government's arses and peddle their myths, and there is some sort of independence when it comes to recommending what staff are paid. It is not until they reform it, give us a say who sits on it, and hopefully from a Labour government we expect to see some backing, then we should carry on telling them to stick it.  
(Applause)

This report calls on the Labour government to get back to the drawing board when it comes to the two-tier award, something we could want, fight, embed in our outsourced services. It calls for a return to the principles Labour once held at their heart on a fair wage resolution, and the development of real practical consultation frameworks, like the school support staff negotiating body. Congress, imagine a world, no, fighting for a world where we are ensuring TAs have their own support staff negotiating body, where it can fight for 52 week contracts, for a world where we refuse to accept that outsourced workers are worth anything other than minimal national public sector pay rates and pensions, for a world where we do not settle for a measly wage rise but fight for wage redress, for a world where we can tell 750,000 women carers funded through our local authorities and the NHS that we are ending their sexist and racist task time working and making sure they are valued by those public sector funding bodies and paid the right rates for what they do and all of the time they are doing it.

These are the fights I joined the union for. We are not a drain on the economy. We are the foundation of our economy and whilst we are suffering our communities, society, and country, are suffering. Congress, please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Perfect timing. Perfect timing. Midlands?

SIMON DAY (Midlands) Paramedic and sometimes ambulance driver, for those who know me. I am here to support this report on behalf of Midlands Region. The Special Report on Public Sector Pay built on our values and our principles, fair pay, just pay, and equal pay. That is important. That is what we campaigned on over the Christmas period for strike action in the ambulance service. We have seen, as this report highlights, the worst public pay squeeze in history that has seriously and devastatingly affected our public services because that squeeze has been fundamentally aimed at an attempt to balance the books out of the pay packets of our public service workers. But, importantly, we would encourage you to back this report because what we found in A02 Ambulance Branch was that building a campaign around the desires of our members, building an industrial action campaign around our desires, it increased our numbers by over 40% in about six months. (*Applause*) We want some more outgrowth and I would encourage us to recognise and encourage others to build on the campaigns outlined in this report. We need to realise that we will not make work better until we make schools better, until we make community better, until we make our health better, and I would add social care to that as well.

Please support restoring pay and conditions in the public sector. Please support this report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. London Region?

NICOLA WARR (London): Low pay in the public sector causes many problems such as attracting and keeping staff but ultimately low pay means financial difficulties and hardship for workers. Public sector workers provide vital public services and it is unacceptable this government has chosen not properly to fund their wage increases. Local government and school workers are the lowest paid in the public sector. In 2019, the lowest paid in local government and schools is 79 pence above the minimum wage. Now, the national employer is paying catch-up with the national living wage and warning that jobs and services will be at risk as employers struggle to accommodate the additional cost of keeping up with the national living wage when trying to balance their budgets. This is why we must fight to protect jobs and to protect vital public services that have already been cut to the bone since 2010. The choice should not be wages or services. Public money funds public services and our money should be used to ensure services are fit for purpose and that workers are fairly paid. Is it any wonder that there is a shortage of school support staff when they lose out on eight weeks pay a year because of unfair terms in their contract and are amongst the lowest paid. This year's NJC pay offer has been rejected by members in local government in schools and they now join other public sector workers who have sent a message to this government, that they have had enough of being undervalued and underpaid. Together we are stronger and together we can ensure the fight for pay justice continues and is won. GMB London Region supports. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nicola. Thank you to all those speakers. We move to a vote on the Special Report. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That report is carried.

*The Special Report on Public Sector Pay was ADOPTED.*

## **INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: PUBLIC SERVICES**

THE PRESIDENT: I now move on to section 10, Public Service Motions and will speakers on Composite 12 Motion, which I think they have already down the front. Please be advised of a departure from the published timetable. As a result of two motions coming back on to the agenda, and the Standing Committee decision to accept an emergency motion on Ofsted, the next

block of motions will debate Motions 144 and 146, but please could speakers on those motions be ready for the next set of debates. If there are no speakers on this set of debates against, and qualifications are accepted, then we will take one vote on this group as we did before. Can I have the mover of Composite 12, please.

## **LESSONS FROM CARILLION COLLAPSE AND PRIVATISATION MONITORING SUCCESS**

### **COMPOSITE MOTION 12**

*(covering Motions 140 and 141)*

#### **COMPOSITE 12**

**Covering Motions;**

**140. CARILLION COLLAPSE- LESSONS STILL TO BE LEARNED ON OUTSOURCING CHARGES AND AUDIT MARKET – London Region**

**141. PRIVATISATION MONITORING SUCCESS – London Region**

## **LESSONS FROM CARILLION COLLAPSE AND PRIVATISATION MONITORING SUCCESS**

Congress is concerned that in the five years since January 2018, when the huge outsourcing Carillion collapsed with £1.5bn debt, that lessons on outsourcing public contracts and corporate governance have not been learned.

Carillion held around 450 separate public-sector contracts in schools, prisons, transport and hospitals. Senior management were paid huge sixfigure salaries and bonuses before the company collapsed. Some 3,000 jobs were lost and 7,000 suppliers and contractors were affected. Vital infrastructure projects were delayed and schools and hospitals had no cleaning or catering services.

On outsourcing in some sectors little or no lessons have been learned. For example, in care services for children the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in May 2022, criticised rampant profiteering and called for "a dramatic whole-system reset" of family services. The Competition and Markets Authority found that service providers averaged profit margins of 22.6 per cent between 2016 and 2020 and that councils were paying private placement costs at least £10,000 a week and, in a few cases, up to £60,000 a week.

Action promised to set up a new watchdog to shake up the audit market and rebuild trust in corporate governance has not happened. After a number of reviews the draft legislation is still buried in a lengthy consultation by vested interests.

This Congress congratulates those Regions of the GMB who have campaigned and fought to have privatised services brought back in house and have been successful in those campaigns.

Those successful campaigns should be highlighted and promoted to encourage even greater success and to encourage more visible campaigns to fight to bring contracted services in house.

Congress calls on the Labour Parliamentary Party to press the current government to speed up changes in the audit market and corporate governance.

Congress calls on Labour councillors and union representatives in local councils to take immediate action to end the rip offs of taxpayers in outsourced services by forensic attention to the charges for outsourced services.

Congress urges the Labour Party to make a manifesto commitment to a Review to summarise the evidence, based on current information and previous enquiries, on the role of outsourced contractors in providing capital items and services for the public sector in the UK and in other developed countries over the years since the Thatcher and Blair governments enthusiastically promoted the growth in outsourcing.

The aim of the Review should be to

- properly learn the lessons from the collapse of Carillion
- increase scrutiny and transparency • end profiteering at the expense of the taxpayers and
- where necessary end the use of “middlemen” and offshoring.

The Review should examine the evidence whether operators like Carillion and other facilities management services providers have grown far too big to effectively manage all their day to day outsourced operations across the world.

The Review should assess whether these multinational companies primary purpose is to serve as mechanisms to capture income streams for senior management and shareholders with the provision and day to day management of services to the public a second tier “also ran”.

Congress is asked to support a call for the monitoring of the campaigns, setting out the victories and how the victories were won and to share this information in a readable format on our website.

Only by showing that we are winning the fight against privatisation and how that fight was carried out will be able to ensure our policy against privatisation is winning and we will not change our resolve until the scourge of privatisation of our public services has been beaten.

**MOVING REGION: LONDON**  
**SECONDING REGION: LONDON**

*(Carried)*

ROBERT WHEELER (London): Congress, this motion calls for lessons to be learned from the collapse of outsourcing contractor Carillion and from nearly 40 years of practical experience on the ground of using outsourcing across the public sector. Outsourcing and in-house provision and changes from one way of delivering services to the other are nothing new. In the 1890s in the first decade of this union’s existence John Burns, one of the founders of the new unionism set up in Battersea Trades and Labour council and successfully ran for election in the Borough with the slogan, *Cut out the middle man*. After taking control of the council, he brought all outsourced services back in-house with the express purpose for both saving money and improving wages and terms and conditions for the workers involved. Subsequently, in 1907 John Burns, the Labour MP for Battersea, as a Cabinet Minister successfully introduced the Fair Wages Resolution, which legislated that workers providing services for the public had to be paid the same wages and conditions whether they work in the

public or the private sector. At a stroke this eliminated the possibility of contractors putting in lower tenders for work based on lower wages and conditions than the rate in the public sector. This brought an end to a lot of outsourcing. It is no coincidence that in the 1980s Mrs. Thatcher repealed the Fair Wages Resolution which opened the door for the two-tier workforce and the spreading like wildfire of outsourcing and privatisation of the delivery of public service.

The trade unions were unsuccessful in getting the Blair and Brown Labour government to reinstate the Fair Wages Resolution to end unfair competition in bidding for public contracts. The two-tier workforce has become a standard part of delivering public services in both Tory and Labour run councils, in the NHS, and national government. The Carillion collapse is just one of the long litanies of things that have gone wrong over the 40 years. It is imperative that lessons are learned from this and a wider history of outsourcing. Other examples of profiteering are mentioned in this motion. This motion is to try to start a process where trade unions are more successful in persuading the next Labour government to take action and end exploitation of the lowest paid workers in the economy, and get value for money for taxpayers.

We call on the Labour Party to make a manifesto commitment to fully review the history with a view to learn lessons that should inform its new approach to outsourcing and unfair competition in pay and conditions. This review should learn the lessons from the Carillion collapse and increase scrutiny and transparency. We need to end profiteering at the expense of taxpayers and, where necessary, end the use of offshoring. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robert. Secunder?

MARY GIBSON (London): Learning the lessons from Carillion is one thing but our mission is still to bring privatised services back in-house, and we have had some real successes. Two good examples are that we had a victory for the Meek Ready team, we worked across London to get the ambulance fleet ready, and we have successfully begun NHS employees ending their contracts with Mitie and Churchill Group, with a plan to move an agenda for changed terms and conditions. Finally, in my own borough, London Borough of Barnet, Labour won control of the council in April 2022 and have progressed an intense programme of insourcing of key services.



Congress we need to shout aloud about these victories and share them on our websites so that all members can use these examples when fighting employers to bring services back in-house at local levels. Maybe we can have some sample letter as a template to help the councillors. We need to publicise our successes as hard as it is. It is a struggle. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Mover of 143? 143, Southern?

## **A DIVERSE REPRESENTATIVE JUDICIARY MOTION 143**

### **143. A DIVERSE AND REPRESENTATIVE JUDICIARY**

This conference notes

- GMB has established a Judges branch with members from across our judicial system, from criminal to family, from civil to immigration and other tribunal courts
- That a judiciary which includes people from diverse backgrounds who have different life experiences is not only important for those who work in the judiciary but also vital for anyone who ever needs to rely on the court system as well as wider society
- GMB members who work as judges have bravely exposed the many ways that the old boy's network, dominated by white men, from similar socio-economic backgrounds, is reinforced by working practices in the Judiciary
- GMB has exposed the discrimination in the judicial appointments and promotions process including "secret soundings" which are used to gather information about a candidate before an application is considered. This process includes anonymous information about a candidate to be used as part of the appointments and promotions process resulting in bias and prejudice pervading every aspect of the process.
- It means those who are part of the establishment and have similar backgrounds are more likely to be promoted and discrimination can slip into the process
- The Judiciary also regularly fail to implement reasonable adjustment for disabled judges and bullying is common

Conference resolves that GMB will:

- Continue to campaign against discrimination in the Judicial appointments and promotions process
- GMB to campaign for a judiciary which welcomes people from diverse backgrounds and supports their development
- Campaign for the judiciary to apply the Equality Act for judges including reasonable adjustments
- Campaign for an end to bullying in the judiciary to improve the culture in the judiciary
- Call on the government and the Labour party (when next in government) to remove every aspect of discrimination in the appointments and promotions process including abolishing "secret soundings"
- Call on the new Lord Chief Justice to recognise the GMB as the representative union of Judges

### **J25 GMB JUDGES BRANCH Southern Region**

(*Carried*)

SHERINE THOMPSON (Southern): By the way, it is nice and refreshing to see some diversity on the top table. (*Applause*) Congress, it is an honour for me to move this motion as I know this is a very monumental motion for GMB Southern Region, who proudly established a judges branch with members from across our judicious system, from criminal to family, civil to immigration, and other tribunal courts. Congress, this motion resonated profoundly for me being a victim myself of bullying, discrimination, gas lighting, victimisation, and harassment, and suffering adverse detriment at the hands of power who make decisions that negatively and adversely affect the lives of others.

Today I stand a proud wounded warrior, a potential Jay slayer, currently relying on the sympathy of employment judges as I assert my statutory employment rights in a David and Goliath employment tribunal claim now in its fourth year, where I and my previous manager are both litigates in person. I am proud to report on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 judges made a judgment partly in favour of my manager's race claim against all the odds and beating the 51% of UnionLine criteria. Then I fought for a similar outcome.

Congress the fact I am standing here to move this judiciary motion proves to me that discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation, has no respect of person, status, class, or social economy. Shamefully, the old schoolboys club and the networks are still operating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it must stop. During this Congress I have heard much about lighting and burning fires. In my culture we say "burn fire pandat", so today we have burn fire pan bullying and discrimination so we need the fire service. Yes, this girl is on fire. I am a girl with passion for change. I hate injustice and hypocrites. Today I rise to the challenge on behalf of judges to call out and end a bullying culture and toxic hostile working environment. We burn fire pandat and those in power and influence who turn a blind eye and take no action, shame on you. We burn fire pandat.

Congress, it is time to expose and speak up against all forms of discrimination and harassment as we build a multicultural environment and diversity in the judiciary system. Today we shine the spotlight on the shenanigans of the judiciary system. Let's expose the situation, consisting of private communications among possible appointees, described by a potential interviewee as a licence to discriminate, to perpetuate a judiciary which is perceived as being not only pro white but which also has a built-in bias against minority and women solicitors. Today we burn fire pandat.

Congress, a lot is riding on the support and adoption of this motion as the reality for many who are subject to the discriminatory practices suffer in silence, ghosted, isolated, and ostracised from their colleagues and peers, many presently work exhausted and drained, with a deep sense of loss, with a certain feeling of hopelessness. Sadly, this consequence leads to low mood and ----

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Could you wind it down now, Sherine, please.

SHERINE THOMPSON (Southern): ---- and worse times of self-harming or suicide. Congress, we need to resolve for GMB to campaign for the end of bullying of judiciary and to improve the culture within, and today we heard from the Labour leader, this morning, who wants to get back into government as we appeal to remove every aspect of discrimination in unfair appointments and promotions ----

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Sherine, close your motion, please.

SERREEN THOMPSON (Southern): ---- we burn fire pandat. I hope that you will move this motion. I hope you adopt this motion. I support and I move. (*Applause*)

TIM LANGLOIS (Southern, Jersey, Channel Islands): Thank you, Sherine. How do you follow that? A bonfire! Statistics from 2022 alone show that one in 12 judges have experienced workplace harassment and bullying. Why should it be that such a high respected and regulated profession does not have the support or representation it evidently needs. Touching momentarily on the judicial candidate process and appointments, my daughter is due to qualify as a solicitor, although not a judge yet. As a first generation lawyer in my family she has already known discrimination linked promotions and unfair candidate selection early on in her career. It is no surprise it extends to levels high up in the judiciary. The judges branch aims to provide consistency and security for every person choosing to take up this career. The legal profession is well established. However, its structures remain in concrete and old school. We must remember judges are only human. The GMB have the opportunity to render the discrimination and workplace bullying, and harassment within the judiciary by providing support and representation which everyone should be entitled to. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tim. Mover of 151?

## **FIGHTING BACK AGAINST LOCAL GOVERNMENT CUTS AND IMPLEMENT GMB POLICY**

### **MOTION 151**

#### **151. FIGHTING BACK AGAINST LOCAL GOVERNMENT CUTS – IMPLEMENT GMB POLICY**

This Congress is extremely concerned, disappointed and angry that Labour councils continue to make huge cuts and to privatise our services. A recent major report concluded that English councils have been 'hollowed out' after 12 years of Conservative austerity.

This Congress notes that whilst it is existing GMB policy (carried at Congress 2016) to campaign for Labour councils to refuse to pass on Tory austerity cuts – and to launch a campaign to win back the billions of pounds withheld since 2010 – this policy has never been implemented.

This Congress notes the GMB Policy Guide 2022 doesn't appear to even reference the policy.

This Congress further notes that:

- Over 500,000 council workers have lost their jobs since 2010, many of them GMB members
- Councils saw a £15bn real-terms reduction to core Government funding between 2010 and 2020
- Over £1 billion further cuts are proposed
- Private contractors continue to cut pay, conditions and services
- The cost-of-living crisis is worsening, as millions of families are pushed into debt and destitution

This Congress therefore instructs the CEC to implement the 2016 policy, and call on Labour councils to set legal, balanced, no cuts needs-based budgets.

Class struggle is intensifying in the UK and workers, including many GMB members, are fighting back against the government and local council attacks on our livelihoods, our public services and our health system.

The stakes are high. If we do not fight now, using the best and most effective methods, local government as we know it will disappear.

No more cuts, no more privatisation, and no more austerity from Labour councils!

**X34 GMB@PCS BRANCH**  
**London Region**

*(Carried)*

PETER BIGGS (London): Congress, local authority services have been under attack for years, thanks to Conservative austerity cuts it started in 2010. Between 2010 and 2022 central government's core funding for councils was slashed by 50%. The impact of this hollowing out of local government has been huge housing waiting lists and homelessness which has rocketed, families pushed into debt and destitution, resources for children's services and education worsened, and social care failing, libraries, swimming pools, children's leisure centres, and other services have closed or had their hours cut. Council workers have seen their pay and conditions attacked since 2010. It is estimated more than half a million council workers have lost their jobs and many of those were GMB members.

The cost-of-living-crisis, the worst attack on workers' living standards in 50 years, has worsened this pressure. Soaring inflation means councils' reduced budgets have less purchasing power and at a time of increased demand for those services. Councils are in a world of unanticipated deficit of hundreds of millions. These cuts are set to continue. To make ends meet over the coming year, a market report from the local government information unit found the majority of councils will be cutting spending on services, increasing commercial investments or activity spending their reserves and/or increasing their level of borrowing. None of these initiatives are part of a strategy to force more certain resources from central government and none have been stopped by Labour and other councils passing on yet more Tory cuts.

Congress, this motion argues for a different way forward. We need to demand that Labour councils fight back instead of continuing for yet another year to meekly pass on Tory cuts. This has been GMB policy since 2016 and this year we need to make it happen again. This motion calls for the CEC to implement the 2016 policy, Motion PS8 Local Council Budgets, and campaign for a Labour council to set legal balance, no cuts, needs-based budgets. Labour councils can do this legally by using reserves, capitalising eligible general fund expenditure and borrow prudentially to generate resources, but these are short-term financial measures. They will allow Labour councils to set a legal no cuts budget which will bide time for them to build a better campaign with other Labour councils, with GMB and the trade union movement, with communities, and fight against continuing austerity, to win back the hundreds of billions of pounds lost to council services since 2010.

Congress, our members in local councils expect Labour councils to stand with us, not inflict further Tory cuts ----

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can you wind up now, please?

PETER BIGGS (London): -- no more cuts, no more privatisation, no more austerity from the Labour councils. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder for 151? Formally? Thank you.

*Motion 151 was formally seconded.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, does London accept the qualifications on Composite 12? Sorry, first of all, can I ask Dean Gilligan to reply. Sorry, Dean.

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): Responding to the debate on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is seeking to support Composite 12 and Motion 151 with qualifications. Composite 12 calls on the Labour Party to carry out a full review of outsourced contracts. Our qualification is this: a review should also consider Covid contracts given out during the pandemic. We also believe that Labour in government should enact policies to bring about its commitment to see the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation, in line with a longstanding GMB policy against outsourcing and privatisation.

On Motion 151, GMB is at the forefront of the fight against cuts to local government jobs and outsourcing and austerity. GMB is committed to opposing cuts within the law and to campaign for further and more generous funding settlements. GMB actively campaigns against local government cuts at all levels of the union and are actively campaigning for a radically improved funding settlement for local government. Our qualifications to this motion are that GMB will continue to campaign against cuts within the law, changes to legislation since the 1980s can allow central government to appoint commissioners who will impose cuts without any democratic accountability and as a democratic principle the campaigning approach taken to individual council cuts must remain a matter for our members at the branches affected. It should also be noted that the national policy guide was first published in May 2017 and it was not intended to be a comprehensive record of all motions carried prior to that date.

Congress, please support these motions with the qualifications I have laid out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Does London accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Also, for 151? *(Agreed)* Congress, all these three are being supported. We will take them all together as one vote, all those in favour please show? Any against? That is Composite 12, Motion 143, and 151, have all been carried.

*Composite Motion 12 was CARRIED*

*Motion 143 was CARRIED*

*Motion 151 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask for the movers of Motion 144, 146, and Emergency Motion 4. The speaker for 144, please?

## **INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: PUBLIC SERVICES**

### **MANDATORY RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR STAFFING RATIOS FOR EACH AND EVERY CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL MOTION 144**

#### **144. MANDATORY RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR STAFFING RATIOS FOR EACH AND EVERY CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL.**

This Congress SEND Schools across the country are experiencing staffing shortages and retention issues due to poor pay, an ever-increasing workload, and unsuitable working terms and conditions. The increase in CF50a's (report's on assaults/violent incident forms) that have been processed, have increased as a result of the economic hardships schools face - as mentioned previously. We are calling on congress to help us rectify this situation, by encouraging the government to adopt risk assessments for staffing ratios for each classroom in the UK. Using EHCP's (educational healthcare plans), ILPP's (Individual learning pathway plan – A plan based around what educational targets a pupil works towards on a daily basis) IPRA's (individual pupil risk assessment – a risk assessment based around what risk comes with a pupil's behaviour) and IBMP's (Individual behaviour management plan – how a school manages a pupil's complex behaviour) to quantify Staff to pupil ratios. Each of these plans do not come with a ratio or adequate staffing for said child. Some Individual Pupil Risk Assessments, have PBSP's (positive behaviour support plans) these will specify an appropriate ratio for when a child is in crisis, not when that child is regulated. None of these plans factor in the whole class staff ratio and it creates a culture within schools where you are putting plasters over issues but not solving and maintaining regulated, calm and happy pupils. If a child with a PBSP is dysregulated that will take the members of staff who are overseeing a classroom to follow the PBSP plan. We feel If the risk is too high due to low staff and a high number of pupils in a classroom, the school must shut the class until staffed adequately, to decrease the number of violent incidents happening in classrooms, for both the child's safety and staff's safety.

#### **LS10 LEEDS SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF.BRANCH North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Carried)*

ROSALEEN MCKENNA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): First of all, we would like to thank Congress for your support in voting to put Motion 144 back on the agenda allowing me to speak and giving us all a vote. Before I lay out our case, I would like to put on record that we have only one national school committee, not two. There are a number of school forums but these are not national committees.

Congress already recognises that SEND schools across the country are experiencing staff shortages and retention issues due to poor pay, an ever increasing workload, and unsuitable work and conditions. The increase of CF50s and CF50As, otherwise known as assault forms, mainly filled in by

support staff, teaching assistants, learning support assistants in schools reflecting the increasing assaults, violence, verbal abuse, and other aggressive behaviour they are experiencing at work. This violence mainly comes from children. Even though educational health and care plans, and other plans, are in place they may specify an appropriate ratio of staff while a child is in crisis but not when that child is regulated. None of these plans factor in the whole class staff ratio for each and it creates a culture within schools where you are putting sticking plasters over issues but not solving and maintaining regulated calm and happy pupils.

I call on Congress to help us rectify this situation by encouraging government, local councils, and school governors, to adopt risk assessments for staffing ratios in the UK. Violence in schools is on the increase. We must challenge and change this. We want local authorities to protect support staff by closing classrooms if staff to pupil ratios are not in place. This de-escalates verbal and violent abuse to protect both staff and children. The CEC is concerned that there is a risk that this motion will give the Government an authority as an excuse to close SEND provision down if they are not meeting the staffing ratios. Schools and SEND units are already closing. We are asking for legal change to protect our hardworking, overworked and underpaid support staff. We need your support to make work better for all school support staff, especially in SEND schools. Our first duty is to protect our members from harm and abuse under the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rosaleen. Seconder? Thank you.

*Motion 144 was formally seconded.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The mover of 146?

## **CLEAR COVER POLICY FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF**

### **MOTION 146**

#### **146. CLEAR COVER POLICY FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF**

This Congress calls for a Cover policy in schools.

We note that teaching assistants are increasingly being asked to do more work without being paid. This includes being asked to cover classes for absent teachers or emergency cover. Teaching assistants often "step up" out of goodwill and are often not paid for doing so saving schools hundreds if not thousands of pounds in agency costs. A cover policy would help secure extra pay, define who can cover when and how long the cover is for.

**L16 GREENWICH BRANCH**  
**Southern Region**



*(Carried)*

LINDITA SALIASI (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker.

*(Applause)* Congress, teaching assistants serve as the backbone of the school. They are the key members of staff who work closely with the most vulnerable children to assist their learning, and always go above and beyond their role and duties. Teaching assistants are increasingly being asked to do more work without being paid for the extra duties. This includes being asked to cover classes for absent teachers, sickness, teachers planning time, or emergency cover. With the goodwill of the teaching assistants this saves the school hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds a year in agency costs yet teaching assistants receive no extra money or recognition for doing this. At present Level 2 teaching assistants should not cover classes at all. Level 3 teaching assistants can cover in an emergency no longer than one session so as the school can plan for agency cover going forward. Yet schools are asking them to cover more for longer without extra pay.

Being a primary school teaching assistant myself for almost 15 years I know exactly what it is like to turn up for school and suddenly being asked to cover classes on almost a daily basis. We are thrown in the deep end without notice, without any preparation. It can cause a great deal of stress and anxiety. What I would like you to do now is to put yourselves in my shoes. Imagine the pressure of being in a classroom unprepared for the lesson because you have been told to cover a class as soon as you walk in the school. Then I would like you to imagine dealing with a class of 30 children and some of the children have challenging behaviour issues; add to that children who speak English as their second language. Imagine in that class there are children with neurodiversity needs, or the special education pupils whose teaching assistant support has not turned up that day. Now I ask you to imagine what it is like to cover in different year groups you have not worked in before, delivering a curriculum you have not heard before, without knowing the children or the dynamic of the class. It can be a highly stressful environment when you do not have time to think or breathe.

Would you like that for yourself? This is what a teaching assistant's day across the UK looks like. This is what my day looks like. We are effectively replacing a teacher on a teaching assistant's wage. Yet we have to do this without extra pay, without being able to say no for fear of losing our jobs, in a time when we are not in a cost-of-living-crisis. We are already one of the lowest paid staff in school and all we ask is to be paid for the job we are

doing. Teaching assistants have almost been exposed to a form of modern day slavery with the amount of unpaid hours they work in this cover role. We are asking for a clear cover policy in place which would ensure that if a teaching assistant is called upon to cover class that there is the correct rate of pay. A clear cover policy would help define who can cover when, how long the cover is for, and a clear pay scale when covering. Congress, please support this motion. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lindita. Secunder?

MARZENA ZBOROWSKA HUGGETT (Southern): Teaching assistants lowest paid sector, prorated wages, key workers, working with your children, women, used by schools out of three sources of cover in place of teachers absence. TAs are taking classes without extra pay and let's get this straight, I am not only talking about occasional cover but also about cases of long term sick absence and maternity leave. It is hard to ask for pay when you are told by head teacher, who earns eight times more than you, how difficult the financial situation in the school is, and how much school would save by not employing agencies. There was agreement for a monitoring group to produce guidance. The workload agreement on TAs signed by a then Labour government, and GMB covered the roles of TA Level 3 and 4 on providing emergency short-term cover. From this guidance two new roles were created, covers for primary and HLTAs. Brilliant, isn't it? But this document was produced 20 years ago and is only guidance, the majority of staff never heard of and clearly school management is either not aware of it or choose not to follow. Too many TAs are working for free that is why we are asking for policy. Congress, it is 2023 and we must, I repeat, we must have clear-cut policy as guidance is clearly not fit for purpose. TAs must be paid for the role they do. Congress, I am calling you to stand up for our TAs, they deserve better. Congress, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Marzena. Mover of Emergency Motion 4?

## **OFSTED**

### **EMERGENCY MOTION 4**

#### **REFORMING OFSTED INSPECTIONS: RAISING STANDARDS AND SUPPORTING SCHOOLS**

Congress notes the Ofsted statement on 21 April 2023 from His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman commenting on the union calls for reform and a pause in Ofsted school inspections following the tragic suicide of headteacher Ruth Perry.

Ofsted states that its aims are to “improve lives by raising standards in education” and that their inspections “help education recover and improve.” But sadly, this is far from the case.

We all know schools are put under pressure by Ofsted but a London Region poll in April 2023 showed that over 70% of support staff work extra hours to prepare for an Ofsted inspection and shockingly 87% do not get paid for this extra work.

8 in 10 members say Ofsted does not have a positive impact on schools and puts them under too much pressure.

The current system of Ofsted inspections, the grading and lack of engagement needs a radical reform. The simplistic ratings do not give a proper overview of the school and a poor rating can have a devastating impact on a school and result in job losses for our members, if pupil numbers drop as result.

We know that many of our school-based members are suffering some form of work-related stress or anxiety which impacts on their mental health and wellbeing and Ofsted just adds to it. Comments from our members about the Ofsted Inspection process include – “The demands are so high that morale is so low. So much so that I am considering leaving a job I love” and “It needs to be fairer. Look at the positives and help with the weaknesses”.

This Congress calls on GMB to work with the Department for Education to provide:

- A replacement inspection service that is fair, supportive and works in collaboration with schools before and after inspections with an agreed programme for review.
- A system that looks beyond just teachers and finally recognises support staff for the invaluable work they carry out in schools, often with our most vulnerable children. This system should include recognition and on-going support for staff mental health and wellbeing.

### **H37 HILLINGDON BRANCH LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): I am moving the Emergency Motion 4 for reforming Ofsted inspections and raising standards and supporting schools. Ofsted, its mission statement claims that it improves lives by raising standards of education and insists that their inspections help education to recover and improve. However, we cannot ignore the fact that this reality falls very, very short of their promises. The name Ofsted causes me frustration and stress. My brain links it with excessive workloads, pressure that accompanies an impending Ofsted inspection, countless hours spent preparing, gathering evidence, ensuring that everything is perfect for the inspectors and despite our best efforts we schools are demoralised by just being given a simple rating that fails to capture the essence of the school and the exceptional work done by my colleagues. My experience is not unique. Many support staff face similar challenges with the fear of a poor inspection looming over them, and a constant state of anxiety and stress that takes a toll on mental health and wellbeing,

impacting on their ability to provide the best education for our children. Additionally, the impact of Ofsted's expectations extends beyond the classroom.

I had the privilege of working with dedicated teaching assistants whose work goes above and beyond to support our students. They lack recognition, they lack support during inspections. It leaves essential individuals who work so closely with our most vulnerable children and deserve acknowledgement for their invaluable contributions. A recent poll conducted by London Region revealed that 70% of support staff in schools work extra hours for Ofsted inspections. Shockingly, only 87% of them receive any kind of additional compensation for their work. I just had Ofsted and I got offered a pizza. That is something! Such undue pressure on our education professionals is unacceptable. It is disheartening to note that 8 out of 10 members believe that Ofsted has not provided a positive impact on our schools and that it placed undue pressure on them. The current system of inspections with its simplistic ratings, lack of engagement, and the required radical reform, these ratings fail to provide a comprehensive overview of the school performance, and a poor rating can be devastating to a school. It can include job losses for our dedicated members if the pupils numbers decline as a result of this unfair rating system.

Therefore, I call on this esteemed Congress and our union to work alongside the Department of Education to take the following steps: first of all, we must establish an inspection service that is fair, supportive, and emphasises collaboration with schools before and after inspections, a new system that would involve the agreement of a programme allowing schools to actively participate in the process and work towards improvement rather than being subjugated to arbitrary judgments. Secondly, we create a system that recognises the invaluable work carried out by our support staff, particularly those that work with our most vulnerable children. This recognition should extend beyond just teachers and include the ongoing support staff mental health and wellbeing by acknowledging the crucial role they play in the school staff. We should foster a more inclusive and supportive education system if this goes through. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Luke. Secunder?

CATHERINE HANLON (London): I am speaking as a member of support staff myself. Our motion asks there to be an inspection system that works

positively and collaboratively with our schools. It is not acceptable that the current system brings so much pressure and no positive change. Further, it is unfair that teaching assistants are expected to carry out unpaid extra work to prepare for the Ofsted inspections. The poll carried out in London shows that our members in schools are also experiencing stress because of the Ofsted inspections but, as it happens, so often support staff are overlooked in this regard. Comments from members include, support staff are under the same pressure as teaching staff when Ofsted come to observe, but we never get feedback, only teachers do. It is stressful waiting for them to come back; also dreading if you are stopped in the corridor and asked questions. I know my mind would go blank and I would be so nervous. Another told us, Ofsted inspectors seem to be very dismissive of support staff. Maybe if they discussed their feelings on how the school is run they would have other perspective. We had an inspection recently and only one of our support team was asked to speak to the inspector and sadly the attitude of Ofsted was typical. Support school staff are the backbone of the school. Schools simply could not operate without them and yet they are overlooked, undervalued and underpaid, and they and the children they work with deserve to have a system that recognises the great work that they do. We need change. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call Dean Gilligan now.

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): Thank you. Vice President, Congress, responding to the debate on Schools for the CEC. Congress, the CEC is asking you to support all motions with a limited number of qualifications.

On Motion 144 we fully support the objectives of the motion. no one should feel unsafe at work including in our schools. Our qualifications are that further investigations needs to be done to establish what the cut-off this levels that the motion calls for should be. These levels may vary, for example, by type of primary need in special schools. We must also be mindful of the potential political risk associated when introducing requirements that could be used as an excuse to close some types of provision, including potentially whole SEND classes, all units, or to illegally off roll some children. We therefore suggest that the matter should be looked into in more detail by the National Schools Committee.

On Motion 146, our qualification is that while Congress can give its full backing to campaigns led by our members decision making in national and local pay and conditions bargaining must always be in the hands of the members who are directly affected.

Second, there is already guidance on cover which members should be using to make sure that they are only working what they are supposed to do. Our qualification is that any negotiated pay must be done to the appropriate committee and membership engagement.

Finally, Congress, we are supporting Emergency Motion 4 again with a qualification. The CEC's first qualification is that in cases of death by suicide we should be cautious when discussing individual cases and that the case highlighted by the motion, an inquest is ongoing. In addition, we would like to bring the matter of expanding any future inspectorate body or a reformed Ofsted to our national committee with engagement from our members. There may be unintended consequences for our members if Ofsted's remit was to be widened and any specific proposals would need to be subject to close consultation and scrutiny. The CEC recognises that we should also be sensitive and cautious in debate when cases include death by suicide. We would point to organisations such as Samaritans if members have already been affected by these issues.

Congress, please support the motions with the qualifications that I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. North East, Yorkshire & Humber, do you accept the qualification on Motion 144? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Southern, do you accept the qualification on Motion 146? (*Agreed*) Thank you. London, do you accept the qualification on Emergency Motion 4? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Colleagues, I am going to take this all as one vote, as they are all being supported, all those in favour please show? Any against? That is 144, 146, and Emergency Motion 4, all carried.

*Motion 144 was CARRIED*

*Motion 146 was CARRIED*

*Emergency Motion 4 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can I have the speakers of 152, 154 and 157, please, with 152 to the rostrum?

## **INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY: PUBLIC SERVICES**

### **WHERE IS THE DUTY OF CARE?**

#### **MOTION 152**

## **152. WHERE IS THE DUTY OF CARE**

This Congress Notes that there are staff shortages in every department of the NHS, the hospital setting is there for the safety of the patients and staff.

What we have at present is the dangerous low level of trained nursing staff on the wards being compromised, we report that the level of nursing staff on the wards for the patients is not safe, they reply they do not have any more staff to cover.

It has been reported that Health Care Support Workers (Band 3) have been left in charge of the ward until a trained staff member has arrived, this could be anything from 30- 45 minutes or longer, at that time where is the duty of care to the patients and the staff member, how can we assist our members in this situation, the HCSW has skills, but not with a life-threatening action that could happen with a patient.

We ask congress:

To work with the NHS to have a procedure in place to safe guard our members.

To work with the NHS to ensure that no HCSW is running a ward for any length of time.

To lobby the government that this is their duty of care.

## **S11 PRIMARY CARE NURSING. BRANCH GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

MELANIE GALE (GMB Scotland): First time delegate, first-time speaker. Who has the duty of care? This is not from an NHS perspective. I am bringing this motion to Congress to ask for your support and for this motion to be passed. Who has the duty of care and how to support our NHS workers, especially our GMB members. In Scotland we have employed 161,329 people in the NHS and this has been documented by the Scottish Government. In the NHS today we are coming across already experience of inadequate staffing levels, our skill mix is poor, and this could lead to only two newly qualified staff nurses on together on a shift. Again newly qualified staff nurses coming through our door and we are not there, they do not get the support from the most experienced members of staff. Sickness vacancies, I continuously use the bank of agency staff that we are using at the present moment to fill these gaps. This in turn leads to poor care and this then leads on towards our patients and we are failing our patients by not providing that duty of care.

I have been a nurse for many years. My common joke is I am 261 years old and I trained with Florence Nightingale. That is how old I feel. I have seen the pressures on the NHS and how much pressure, especially for our NHS workers. Covid was one of the biggest. You have no idea what NHS workers

went through with Covid. We have already gone through poor PPE, staff sicknesses, people not being able to stay there. There was the burnout from Covid, our staff were on their knees, we are still on our knees. Our staff vacancies. we are losing so many experienced staff up and down our NHS because they do not want to work there any more. They have had enough. This in turn leads to student nurses and newly qualified staff nurses not having that support from our experienced nurses, and this is just not acceptable, and also our high fitness rates, it needs to stop.

I myself have experienced burnout, I was tired, I caught Covid, I was off for four months, I felt exhausted all the time, I could not even walk a length to the bathroom. I would rather sit in the bathroom because I did not want to go back because I am so done. Every day coming to work I may be the only staff nurse on a shift for 30 to 28 patients. Waiting for staff to come on for a shift if you are that night shift worker and everybody knows night shift you want to go home, you are knackered, but you are waiting for that nurse to come in and take over from you and likewise on the other wise you are waiting for your night shift to come in for you to be able to go home, and sometimes it is only our healthcare support workers that were on that floor waiting for a trained member of staff. This in turn is not really good and this could lead to us working, and I have worked, 14, 16, 17, 18 hours waiting for somebody to relieve me, or I do not want to leave that newly qualified staff nurse by themselves.

When we have a process in Scotland we would call a defect, but it is not called that all across Scotland, it is an online incident reporting, and in turn can then be a shortage of staff to see if we can push. For this we have a duty of care – and I promise I will speed up, I do apologise – for this we have a duty of care to ensure our staffing have the proper measures put in place. I am asking Congress, please support this motion. We need to stand by our members. We need to stand by our NHS. Thank you. I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Melanie. Secunder?

CIORSTADH REICHLÉ (GMB Scotland): A good skill mix in any workplace is important. Within the wards and the departments of the NHS it is fundamental to patient safety. We as clinical staff have a duty of care to our patients and our comprehension of the emphasis of that has brought my colleague and I to the podium today. Where is the duty of care to workers? A poor skill mix is dangerous for patients, yes. However, the stress felt by inexperienced workers thrust into more senior workplace expectation



is not appropriate to their knowledge and skills. I ask again, where is the duty of care to our workers and our members. Congress, it is not just confined to the NHS, let's face it. What we need is closer examination of staffing numbers and skills in the NHS. As trade unionists we should be protecting and supporting our members from this type of dangerous exposure to potential disciplinary action.

We also need further analysis of managerial evasion of this situation. We do this, Congress, by holding NHS management and health boards or trusts to account by permitting these incidents occurring all too regularly in our NHS. Congress, they too have to learn that they have a duty of care. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Mover of 154?

### **END TO DISGRACEFUL WASTE OF MONEY IN THE NHS MOTION 154**

#### **154. END TO DISGRACEFUL WASTE OF MONEY IN THE NHS**

This Congress must commence a campaign to bring an end to the draining of NHS resources away from direct patient care.

Fat Cat Bosses created by yet another restructuring of the NHS has led to huge salaries being paid to Senior Managers in the newly created ICS's.

Also the multiple tiers of Management within all trusts spending huge and unnecessary amounts of money on Band 8a and above Managers.

#### **B14 BARNESLEY HEALTH BRANCH North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Carried)*

MARTIN JACKSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, an ICS is an integrated care system and an ICB is an integrated care board. With the new reorganisation of the NHS in 2021/2022 it brought about 42 new organisations in the NHS, that is 42 integrated care systems and each integrated care system has an integrated care board. The chairs of these integrated care boards run between 200 and 250 grand a piece, massive resources moving out of NHS direct patient care into administrators' pockets. Not only have we got 42 chief execs, we have also got the integrated care board. These people are on between 150 and 200 grand a piece. There are about 10 to 15 people on each board; again, massive amounts of money being taken away from direct patient care in the NHS.

What is the cost benefit of this money taken away from direct patient care? For patients it is pretty poor quality improvement. One of the first decisions our integrated care board decided was to say that the hospital will no longer treat hyper acute strokes. I am sure you have all heard, Congress, on the television adverts in relation to stroke management and the need for direct quick care and treatment, our ICS decided that our district generals could not treat hyper acute strokes so that they move them to tertiary centres in Sheffield and Doncaster. What that means, Congress, is if you have a stroke in Barnsley Hospital, we cannot treat you, even though we have the skills, we have the skilled workforce, we have the skilled medications, we have CT scanning, we have everything that we need to deliver that treatment and care but we are being stopped from doing that because of the ICS decision and we have to transfer that patient from Barnsley Hospital to either Doncaster or Sheffield, and that takes at least half an hour. You can see where I am coming from. That quality in care is absolutely hammered by delays in care. It is absolutely appalling that people in Barnsley cannot receive hyper acute stroke care.

It is not just happening in Yorkshire. It is happening in this region, this very region, all the patient transport services in the ambulance services are being outsourced because the ICS have decided due to deficit issues that they are going to outsource all the PTS systems. Congress, we have been assured by, sorry, not Tony Blair but similar to Tony Blair, Keir Starmer today, that they will end a two-tier workforce. Now, if he wants to have a Labour government what he needs to do is to start talking seriously and he needs to start talking about stopping outsourcing of NHS and public services, and he wants to start talking about renationalising water and gas industries, etc. That is the only way that he is going to get re-elected. *(Applause)*

In this region, the ICS has declared an overtime ban in the ambulance service. They have declared that overtime ban because of an overspend but what that means is our members cannot earn extra money but there is a massive detriment to what patients can expect in the service. Patients waiting for an ambulance for five or six hours a couple of months ago are now going to be waiting for 10 or 12 hours because ----

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Martin, can you wind up?

MARTIN JACKSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I can, mate. Please support this motion. I move. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Martin. Secunder?

CHRISTINE LETTIN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): We should fully support this motion. It is general finances taken away from direct patient care and the refocus of NHS funding that people who desperately need these services are provided with high quality care treatment that they deserve. Congress, as well as a massive investment in ICSs we have significant problems at hospital levels. Ten to 15 years ago HR departments would have five, maybe six, people in post. Today these are often in excess of 58 staff in these departments. Then we have project managers. This job was non-existent 10 years ago, now 15 to 20 are employed directly in each district general hospital. These are employed at a great cost. The purpose of these is to reduce costs in hospitals. It is these people in these roles that are attacking our members' terms and conditions. There are huge increases in the workforce in finance departments, also in quality, auditing and administration, whilst there are massive reductions in the delivery of patient care due to staff shortages on the wards. This privatisation or so called soft services departments, catering, cleaning, portering services and procurement. All of these staff roles have a positive effect on the quality of patient care yet the funding afforded to their work is reduced significantly year on year. As a proud patient-facing NHS worker I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Christine. Mover of 157, please? And could I ask for 160, 161, 164, and 165 to come to the front.

## **NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO RESCIND SECTION 2 T&Cs WITHIN AMBULANCE SERVICES MOTION 157**

### **157. NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO RESCIND SECTION 2 T&C'S WITHIN AMBULANCE SERVICES**

This Congress notes that on **1 September 2018**, any new starter to the Ambulance service had their unsocial hours payments paid via the less favourable section 2 of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service handbook rather than the more favourable annex 5. Any existing staff member who moves roles is moved from annex 5 to section 2. Any staff paid under section 2 terms and conditions, unlike annex 5, receive no unsocial hours uplift when off sick. This has introduced a two tier pay structure within ambulance services that provides less favourable terms and conditions for new employees and existing employees who change their role. This cost saving, unnegotiated change to existing and potential members' terms and conditions has proven to be detrimental and discriminatory to remuneration of new staff and has significantly contributed, beyond any other factor, to the halting of progression and development of established staff.

#### **Congress believes:**

Members holding equal or equivalent responsibility and roles should receive equal reward, terms and conditions. That staff who wish to progress in their employment should not be put at financial detriment as a result. That both new staff and those who have progressed should not be put at a financial

detriment when off sick as a result of this cost saving which produces a discriminatory two tier system to pay and conditions.

**Congress resolves:**

That GMB instigates and supports a national campaign to eradicate the use of section 2 terms and conditions in ambulance services.

**A02 AMBULANCE BRANCH  
Midlands Region**

*(Carried)*

SIMON DAY (Midlands): Vice-President, Congress, thank you. Please accept my gratitude and the gratitude of our branch from the Midlands Region for all of you that gave us the opportunity to ask for support from our union for our campaign against section 2 terms and conditions in the ambulance service. Can I also just take a bit of a liberty and quickly make you aware of the GMB Serco Sandwell refuse workers currently on strike in Sandwell, over 150 members of our union on the picket line fighting another greedy outsource profiteering company. *(Applause)* They want the support of our sister unions who are crossing picket lines, please join me and stand to show them support and solidarity from our Congress. *(Applause)* Thank you. Do I get extra minutes for that one? No? Sorry.

Okay, the Right Dishonourable Tory Health Secretary on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018 made sure that any new starter in the ambulance service was contracted on less favourable terms and conditions than current staff and any existing staff member who moves their role in the ambulance service to progress their career was also then contracted on less favourable section 2 terms and conditions. Staff paid on these terms and conditions received less unsocial hours uplift for their shifts are being paid consistently less in their pay packets unlike their colleagues on unexpired terms and conditions, and probably worst of all they receive no unsocial hours payment when they are off sick. This introduced a further two-tier pay structure within the ambulance service that provides less favourable terms and conditions for new employees and existing employees who want us to develop their career. It was a despicable passing on of efficiencies and costs savings to the pay packets of our members in the ambulance service and is fundamentally unacceptable. It is repeatedly proven to be detrimental to the remuneration of new staff, and repeatedly proved to be a bullying tool of employers to keep staff at work when they are not fit to do so and should be off sick. It has significantly contributed beyond any other factor in the ambulance service to the halting of progression and development of long-serving staff.

These terms and conditions, although implemented across the country nationally, are not imposed uniformly by different ambulance trusts and result in regional variations of terms and conditions that flies in the face of GMB's position and opposition on regional public pay structures. That is why your national ambulance committee has prioritised the campaign to organise action amongst ambulance service members and remove section 2 terms and conditions. There could be action that leads to a further ballot. Members holding equal or equivalent responsibility and roles should receive equal reward and terms and conditions. If they are doing the same job they should be receiving the same pay and the same conditions and not be treated differently just because of their start date or because they want to progress. Members who wish to progress in their career should not be put at a financial detriment as a result. It is worth noting at this point that a recent national survey conducted by NAC found that 86% of long-serving staff who responded to the survey would not develop their career because of these horrendous terms and conditions. A massive 93% of that group would develop their career if they remained on the more favourable unexpired terms and conditions that ambulance service staff have historically been paid. These terms and conditions have led to our members being treated very unfavourably indeed and I am sure that you will agree that not only should new staff not be paid worse and existing staff who want to develop their career not be paid worse, but no set of terms and conditions should put an employee and one of our members in a situation where they can be bullied into staying at work when they are sick and not fit to. It is unethical, it is divisive, and it is a cost saving system that is causing ambulance members grief.

Congress, I am still struggling with my computer. We would wholeheartedly agree to a commitment to make work better. I am going to finish now. We request the GMB advocate support with its Labour Party members and seek every opportunity at every level to promote better terms and conditions, unexpired terms and conditions, for our ambulance service staff. Congress, I move this motion. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. Secunder?

IAN BURTON (Midlands): First-time delegate, second time on the stage this week. (*Applause*) Thank you. On Sunday I stood here and talked about pay and the ambulance service and since then I have been receiving quite a few messages of support after I shared my experiences. I thank you all for those. Today I support my colleagues from West Midlands and all

ambulance services with Motion 157. Fair and equal pay for all should mean exactly that. I was going to talk about ambulance drivers or paramedics, technicians, or emergency care assistants as we prefer to call them, but there are unsung heroes in the ambulance service and this section 2 terms and conditions applies to those that we do not see, the control room staff, despatch officers for example, two despatch officers, one on section 2 and one annex 5. In real terms the one on section 2 will be earning between £2,000 and £2,500 a year less than the person on an annex 5. Retention and development of ambulance service staff is more of a problem now than it has ever been before; section 2 is a huge barrier for that as Simon has explained. Many trusts, including the one I work for, are relying on private ambulance providers to help bolster the numbers to put out that safe service they are commissioned to do because they cannot recruit, retain, and develop their own staff. EMAS spends £35,000 a day on private ambulance providers, money surely best spent within their own service.

The complicated pay scale also makes it difficult for them to get right so people are paid incorrectly with the burden being placed on the staff themselves to prove that they have been paid wrong.

If the GMB support this fully, support the NAC with their mission, this is going to recruit new members for the GMB and everyone is going to feel more supported by their union that they love. Congress, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I now call Margi Clark.

MARGI CLARK (CEC): President, Vice President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC on Motion 154 and 157. The CEC is supporting both motions with qualifications.

On Motion 154 the CEC condemn any draining of resources away from the NHS. Our qualification is that before any campaign could be launched on this basis there would have to be detailed research done into the existence and extent of the above.

On Motion 157, the CEC support a call for action against the closure of an annex 5 to new entrants which is contributing to severe pay retention and progression problems in ambulance services. GMB is the lead union in opposition to the enforced transfer of ambulance staff under section 2 terms and conditions including following a change of contract. We were

the only ambulance union to reject the 2018 settlement. GMB has consistently raised this issue through national pay negotiations, NHS pay review body process and our political work. We are seeking to support this motion with two qualifications: the first is to note that this is already a priority campaign within the NHS for GMB and we can take forward that commitment with a renewed focus as a result of this motion. The second qualification is to record that while Congress can give its full backing to campaigns led by our members, as we do here, decision making in national and local pay and conditions bargaining must always be in the hands of the members who are directly affected and that our campaigning work in ambulance services must be led by our members.

Therefore, Congress, please support Motions 154 and 157 with the qualifications I have just set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margi. North East, Yorkshire & Humber, do you accept the qualification on 154? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Midlands, do you accept the qualification on Motion 157? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Colleagues, all these three motions are being supported. I will take them in one vote. All those in favour please show? Any against? 152, 154, and 157 have all been carried.

*Motion 152 was CARRIED*

*Motion 154 was CARRIED*

*Motion 157 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I now ask for the mover of Motion 160 to come to the rostrum?

## **A GLOBAL TRADING SYSTEM THAT IS WORKER CENTRED MOTION 160**

### **160. A GLOBAL TRADING SYSTEM THAT IS WORKER-CENTRED**

Congress welcomes the change in international trades policy spelled out by Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative in the Biden Administration when she said that ***“We need a new world economic order, with a global trading system that is worker-centred.”***

The Biden administration with subsidy regime to promote local US based supply chains in the Inflation Reduction Act has in effect bypassed the neoliberal inspired World Trade Organisation (WTO) which seeks to impose international trade rules that cannot be changed by democratically elected Parliaments.

The multi-lateral WTO rules have allowed a race to the bottom and social dumping. Multinational companies moved production from developed nations with strong employment laws and union organisation into thousands of free trade zones in developing countries where hundreds of million

workers- mainly rural workers moving to cities - are employed. In these free trade zones trade union organisation is actually outlawed, workers are oppressed while the multinational companies are given all sorts of preferential access to services and are exempt from the national laws and taxation.

Some 20% of world trade originates from free trade zones. Household name companies manufacture nearly all the merchandise for sale in our UK high streets and online there.

Any spontaneous industrial action that takes place on any free trade zones has been ruthlessly suppressed by lock outs with the contracts moved to another free trade zone.

Setting up the WTO rules was a severe political defeat for the labour movement in the neoliberal period- when globalised international trade rules were adopted that embedded pro employer protections in these treaties that are not susceptible to changes at national level after democratic elections.

The WTO regime which allowed the free trade zones to trade with the developed countries without challenges to this social dumping has had serious consequences for trade unions organisation across the globe. It has led to the suppression of the growth in the tens of millions of new trade union members who would have been instrumental in promoting economic and social justice and prosperity in developing countries across the globe.

Congress sheds no tears for this erosion and undermining of the WTO.

Congress calls for the TUC and the Labour Party to recognise this fundamental change in the international trade system.

An incoming Labour Government must resist attempts to turn the clock back to restore the multilateral WTO rules without fundamental changes to safeguard against social and environmental dumping.

Until such a multi-lateral trade regime is agreed trade policy for the UK should be determined by the UK Parliament and like the trade policy of the US it should be worker-centred.

Congress cautions the Labour Party to recognise that the EU is a very big supporter of the WTO. Congress calls for an incoming Labour Government in its dealings with the EU to not tie the UK into supporting by the back door any restoration of the WTO rules without the workers-centred changes in trade rules called for by the Biden Administration.

## **B11 BARKING & DAGENHAM BRANCH** **London Region**

*(Carried)*

HEATHER POPE (London): First-time Congress, second time speaking.  
*(Applause)* Congress, the World Trade Organisation sets the rules for international trade. It sets the rules. The next Labour government will find itself in a unique and rare position where there is an administration in Washington which is dedicated to new world economic order, with a global trading system that is worker centred, in the words of Katherine Tai, who is the United States trade representative. This is new and should be welcome by Congress. The new Labour government should take full advantage of this opportunity that the Biden Administration has now opened up.



Trade policy is often seen as arcane and a specialist subject and those versed in the finer points are considered to be a bit nerdy. This has suited those who navigated the transition from the post War general agreement on tariffs and trade to the World Trade Organisation. There is continuity between the two but there are important differences too. However, there is nothing nerdy or arcane about those trade rules. They are high politics by the global elites for the global elites. The specific purpose of some of the main drivers in setting up the WTO to replace GATT was to embed neo liberal trade rules in this multilateral agreement that could not be altered or modified by elected parliaments and governments in member states. Books have been written what they actually achieved in the WTO agreement. It was the advent of China into the WTO trading system that saw the wholesale migration of industries and unionised well paid jobs away from Britain and the United States into low wage China and other emerging economies across the globe.

The United Kingdom had within living memory a huge clothing and textile industry, commercial shipbuilding yards on Tyneside, Merseyside, Cragside, and Belfast, large scale factories alongside thriving engineering and chemical industries, plus many other sectors. Large parts of both Britain and the United States have not yet recovered from this deindustrialisation and globalisation. This has led to political consequences in both countries. Thankfully, politicians in America have woken up to the devastation of good jobs that incredible lax international trade rules ushered in. It is essential that politicians in the United Kingdom do the same and commit to working with the Biden Administration to get serious changes to these rules. These trade rules have absolutely zero minimum standards for wages and conditions, and safety, but they have loads of rules for big public investment and subsidies in many circumstances. As Katherine Tai said, it is now time to usher in a new economic order that is worker centred. Part of the push to change the trade rules is coming from the environmental standards in these new trade rules so that all countries are operating on a level playing field. It is essential that if and when we see any approach to multilateral talks in the WTO process at this time that the minimum standards for union organisation, wages and conditions, and safety, are included. Nowhere in the level playing field is more badly needed than the free trade zones. Countries that do not abide by these standards should have no access to our markets.

THE PRESIDENT: Heather, could you ----

HEATHER POPE (London): Yes. Congress should welcome this turnaround in international trade environment. It is vital we have a seat at the table. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Heather. Secunder?

DAVE LEVY (London): The proposer has explained that the effective role of the World Trade Organisation is in regulating world trade in the interests of capital and contrary to the interests of workers and even democracy. The World Trade Organisation, unlike some trade agreements, such as the EU Single Market, there is no popular democratic oversight and globally most trade policy developments are the domain of governments and conducted in secret. This is certainly so in the United Kingdom. There is no doubt that the WTO is part of the legal infrastructure which permits the offshoring of jobs to locations with poor employee protection laws and weak and often brutally suppressed unions. I was reminded of those brutal suppressions that occur when I attended the Justice for Colombia fringe yesterday. The price paid there for organisation has so frequently been death. It is one of the important reasons why international trade union solidarity is so important. Their fight is our fight.

The outlawing of employment protection law, even when guaranteed by international treaty is being pursued by so-called free trade zones which are coming to the UK soon and have already started in the North East. The evidence that these even meet the needs of their supporters is scant and the evidence there for crime is significant, usually smuggling but latterly corruption. We should be careful of the initiatives of the US in the areas of international trade. Its commitment to workers' rights abroad is, to say the least, variable. The need for workers' rights to be at the centre of world trade governance is obvious and just. I second. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. The mover of Motion 161?

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF REAL LIVING WAGE MOTION 161**

### **161. IMPLEMENTATION OF REAL LIVING WAGE**

This Congress whilst in support of the Real Living Wage for low paid members believes the implementation date of it should be changed.

Currently the RLW is calculated October/November of the current year e.g., 22/23 fiscal year in October of 22.

However, many Employers do not implement it until April of the following year, mean low paid staff get there pay rise a year in arrears and not backdated.

This congress believes that once a RLW for a current year is announced it should be implemented then and backdated to the 1st of April of that year, with staff receiving back pay.

E.G. 22 increase announced in October should have been backdated to April 22 rather than being paid in April 23.

**A55 BRANCH – AVON & WESSEX**  
**Wales & South West Region**

*(Carried)*

JEFFREY SUTTON (GMB Wales & South West): The real living wage affects some of the most vulnerable of workers, although we recognise that this is an improvement on the minimum wage as this is set by looking at the rise of the cost of living. However, it is not preferable to people getting a proper rate of pay for the job they do. It is sad to think that we have people, mostly women, who are earning way below the national average. Just in case you are unaware, the real living wage for 2022/23 was set at £10.90: yes, just £10.90 an hour. The average weekly earnings calculated in April 2023 was £586 or £15.84 per hour just under 50% more than the real living wage. It was only when Bristol City Council implemented the 2022 NJC pay rise that I was contacted by low paid workers who had not had the agreed pay rise; that was one pound an hour. It was then I realised this was because they were on the real living wage as their base pay was below the minimum wage. I enquired and found out that across the South West and around the country the real living wage is implemented at the April after it is set. This means that some of the lowest paid workers do not get their pay rise backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April or to the date it was calculated, but they get paid a rise a year in arrears. In practice, the real living wage for 2023/24 will be set this October or November but they are not implemented till 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 when we are entering the 2024/25 pay period. Is it right that these staff at the very bottom of their pay scale have to wait for over six months to get a pay rise? They are going to be backdated and because of this they are left to struggle on a pay rate that is already out of date when they get it. Employers are praised for signing up to the real living wage but if they had any sense of justice they would not need to pay it as they would pay their staff a wage that provided them with a decent standard of living and not left scratching around at the bottom of pay scales trying to keep

themselves and their families together in the middle of a cost-of-living-crisis.

As a union the GMB must keep up the fight for everyone to have a pay rise that provides them with a good standard of living. It is our duty to protect the weak and the vulnerable to speak for those who cannot. There is a way we can help. We can work more closely with the Real Living Wage Foundation. All they ask is that their members implement the new real living wage as calculated by 1<sup>st</sup> May in the following year. Let's campaign as a movement to get the real living wage paid in the year it relates to, and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April of the year it is calculated for. We owe it to those workers. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jeff. Thank you. Seconder? While the seconder is coming up can I ask the movers and seconders of Composite 8, Composite 9, and Motion 113 to be ready as well, please?

EMMA JAMES (GMB Wales and South West Region): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, while in support of the real living wage for low paid members, we believe the implementation date should be changed in reflection of the calculation of the real living wage which takes place in October/November. Low paid workers do not receive the uplift in payments until April the following year in line with many employers' pay enhancement dates. We would like to see the RLW implemented at the time of announcement. However, I understand that some of the companies take their pay reviews regarding the new tax year anniversary date so many workers are missing out six months increased wages. Where it can it should be a reliable route out of poverty but many are living in poverty with the cost of living continuously rising. Whatever the real living wage amount it should be paid directly to cover the increased rises that working people must pay throughout the year. Colleagues, many people are suffering in great poverty with low income and pay rises failing to keep up with the rise in the cost of living. The delay in implementing the real living wage to pay back causes financial hardship, and setbacks in personal circumstances such as relationship breakdowns, or illnesses. The real living wage is based on annual living costs and considers any fluctuation in these costs such as rent, childcare, travel, food and household bills, and these continue to rise throughout the year, not just from October to November of that year.

We welcome the work that the GMB are currently campaigning on regarding this matter and understand that this will not be a quick fix. We

must continue to fight for the real living wage to be backdated to April of the year it was announced. Please support this. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Perfect. Perfect, Emma. Mover of 164, please?

## **LONDON LIVING WAGE MOTION 164**

### **164. LONDON LIVING WAGE**

This Congress recognises the important work the Living Wage Foundation do in ensuring accredited employers pay a wage that can support our members with the cost of living.

We have members who are having to do two or even three jobs to stay afloat to pay their bills, most of them do not see their children growing up from one week to another due to the amount of work they have to do to make ends meet. The fact that some employers follow the London Living Wage rates goes some way to addressing this issue.

However, this Congress also notes with concern that many Living Wage accredited employers choose to delay the implementation of the Living Wage after announcement, sometimes for up to six months. Over the last year, inflation has increased by double digits. The Living Wage Foundation announced new rates in September 2022 to address this, but many employers wait until the following financial year to implement this increase.

This Congress should support the motion to request that all Living Wage employers pay the Living Wage from the date of announcement, or to at least backdate the increase from the date of announcement, and not delay these much-needed pay increases as long as they can get away with.

### **X19 CAMDEN APEX BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

BARBARA ADJEI-KYEM (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, the Living Wage Foundation working with ensuring employers pay a wage that can support our members with the cost of living is crucial. Low paid workers say that the cost-of-living-crisis is the worst financial period they have faced. 78% of workers are paid below the real living wage. 3.7 million workers nationally say the cost-of-living-crisis is the worst they have seen. The rapid rise in the cost of living is having a serious negative impact on everyone's wellbeing and mental health. The impact is still felt by more households on low incomes. 3.7 million hard-working people are struggling at the moment to attend to their basic needs of food, shelter, and warmth. Poverty means anxiety and increases the risk of depression. In November 2022, the Trussell Trust recorded giving out 1.3 million emergency parcels in just six months. Many of those had not only one but two jobs. Many members are taking two or three jobs just to pay

electricity, council tax, food, schooling costs, and housing costs. However, we know that both the Living Wage Foundation UK-wide and London rates remain far below GMB's policy of what a real living wage should be, which is currently £15 per hour. This is what GMB's policy demands. It is essential that raising workers' wages is achieved through collective bargaining for all workers. The CEC's qualification that any campaign in actioning the motion should in the first instance focus on those signatories who employ our members is welcome. The campaign is for all living wage employers to pay our members the living wage from the date of announcement, which is September 2022 or at least backdate the income from the day of announcement, not delay these much needed pay increases as long as they can get away with it. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Barbara. The seconder?

VARSHA UNADKAT (London): Our union does not want workers to be held to rely on top-ups from family tax credit and benefit in order to make ends meet. They should be paid a decent living wage as the national living wage is £10.42 per hour. We tend to assume that London employers follow the Living Wage scale and pay £11.95. Ideally, we want to push this to our demand for £15 an hour where ever possible. Therefore we welcome employers signing up to be an accredited employer but this should not be a paper exercise. Over the last few years the announcement of new living wages rate has changed. Last year it was announced a new rate in September but we were finding that some companies were not implementing these poor paid workers from this date. We need to locally expose the company where the members highlight what they are doing as they should be paying the extra rate from the time of the announcement or at least backdated to the announcement. Please support this motion. This is my last motion for 2023 Congress so thank you London Region for giving me this opportunity and in correcting and supporting me for all motions. I really appreciate it. I love you, London Region. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Varsha. Mover of Motion 165?

## **THE LIVING WAGE FOR YOUNG WORKERS MOTION 165**

### **165. THE LIVING WAGE FOR YOUNG WORKERS**

Millions of people are facing a cost-of-living crisis, and desperately deserve a pay rise. This is particularly true for young workers, who are facing soaring rents, energy bills and food costs, yet often receive less pay than older colleagues.

The minimum wage is currently £9.50 for those aged 23+, but this falls to £9.18 for 21–22-year-olds, £6.83 for 18-20-year-olds, and £4.81 for under 18s and apprentices. By contrast, the current, independently calculated, Living Wage is £11.95 in London and £10.90 elsewhere.

Young people disproportionately work in insecure sectors such as hospitality and the gig economy. On top of lower salaries, they often endure insecurity and unsocial hours to keep these industries going, which is so essential to local communities and the national economy.

54% of GMB London Young Workers feel that their pay was not fair and relative to similar roles and individuals performing their role. A staggering 99% are worried about the cost-of-living crisis.

It is deeply unfair that any worker should be paid less than they can reasonably live on. It is completely unacceptable that young workers are often paid even less than that.

Conference resolves to support GMB London Young Workers' #DemandFairPay campaign, calling for:

- All employers to pay a genuine Living Wage
- Young workers to be treated and paid equally.
- The Government to legislate for a universal, genuine Living Wage

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

## **X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH**

### **London Region**

*(Carried)*

JOE DHARAMPAL-HORNBY (London): First time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Young people have made two sacrifices in recent years whilst they have cut youth services, stagnant wages, and the tripling of tuition fees. We also pay more for less with Income Tax and student loan repayments at the highest levels for years. During the pandemic young workers disproportionately worked in many critical sectors, from hospitals to food delivery services. Many of them missed out on once in a lifetime experiences, starting university, or going travelling, as the whole country gave up freedom to keep our communities safe. Post Covid an opportunity presented itself to deliver a new deal for young people. Instead, we face a worsening housing crisis, with rents and evictions rising, and the dream of home ownership increasingly distant. This has been compounded by the broader cost-of-living-crisis with weak wage growth outpaced by inflation.

Such economic measures are accompanied by an increasing resentment towards young people, accusations of entitlement, laziness, and wokeness, and some even ridiculing our growing concern about climate change. In reality, the vast majority of young people are working harder, saving more, and simply fearful that their generation is being left behind. I chaired GMB London workers and our survey last year shows that 54% of our members

feel that their pay is not fair or relative to similar roles and individuals performing their role, and a staggering 99% of our members are worried about the cost-of-living-crisis. This reflects the reality for so many young people.

The minimum wage is £10.42 for those aged 23 and above but falls to £10.18 for 21 to 22 year olds, £7.49 for 18 to 20 year olds, and £5.28 for under 18s and apprentices. By contrast, as we have just heard, the independent Living Wage Foundation calculate the current living wage to be £11.95 in London and £10.90 across the rest of the UK. The difference between the 23 plus minimum wage and the real living wage is £936 a year, amounting to 14 weeks of food bills or 11 weeks of housing and energy costs. Young workers deserve so much more. It is not just about fairness. Delivering for young people will mean a more dynamic productive economy, stronger social contracts, and ultimately a rise in living standards for all.

GMB London young workers is calling for all employers to pay all employees a genuine living wage and for the Government to legislate for universal genuine living wage, and finally for young workers to join and become active in trade unions. We have brought in MPs, Assembly members, councillors, Southern Region members, and other trade unions in support of our campaign and we are pleased that the Labour Party is committed to look at tackling this inequality in power. The last Labour government introduced one of the most successful government policies in recent history, the minimum wage. The next Labour government must build on this achievement to deliver a real living wage for all.

At devolved and local levels progress is already being made. In London, for example, Sadiq Khan has overseen the quadrupling of the number of living wage employers, covering 140,000 employees since 2016, but despite this progress many young people continue to face wage inequality and a lack of dignity in work. It is time to fully recognise their contribution and demand fair play. Please support our motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joe. Thank you. A seconder, please? Formally? That is grand. Thank you.

*Motion 165 was formally seconded.*

THE PRESIDENT: Nobody is speaking in opposition. I will ask Kevin Buchanan to come up.



KEVIN BUCHANAN (CEC): The CEC welcomes Motion 160 which calls for fundamental reform of the World Trade Organisation. This is GMB policy adopted by Congress in 2021 and assume new urgency in the light of the Biden Administration's policies. The qualification is to note that the fundamental treatise on international trade predate the World Trade Organisation and the reform of the WTO as a body is unlikely on its own to reach the changes that the motion is calling for.

The motion also calls for UK trade policy to be determined by the UK parliament. The Conservative government has signed the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the CCA, with the EU which replicates several WTO rules, such as its ban on domestic contents requirements. Unilateral departure from these rules risks the swift imposition of tariffs on the goods produced by our members in exporting industries which would put jobs at threat. A qualification is to call instead for the UK government and the Labour Party to work with the Biden Administration to secure worker centred reforms of the international trade treatise.

On Motion 161, the CEC supports the principle of the motion's call for back paying increases in the national minimum wage. We know delays can mean that low paid workers endure months of rising costs without redress. However, the CEC wishes to qualify that enacting this motion would require a change in the minimum wage legislation. This is likely not the right time to do so as it would open up the opportunity for wages legislation to be amended against the interests of our members by Conservative MPs who are hostile to the very idea of a national minimum wage.

The CECs second qualification is that the motion's call for immediate implementation of minimum wage uplifts could prove impractical given the UK wind-up lifts of national minim wage legislation. It is likely that there will always be a need for some period of time to allow employers to make the necessary arrangements to implement uplifts for their payroll.

Motion 164 asks that all accredited Living Wage Foundation employers implement its uplift from the date of the announcement or rather otherwise that they backdate the payments. We support the calls of the motion but with some qualifications. We would not wish compliance with the Living Wage Foundation rates to overtake collective bargaining, which remains the most effective means of raising incomes particularly for lowest paid workers. We also wish to qualify the union's focus should remain on the signatories who employ our members rather than a wider campaign regarding all employers who have signed up and, as always, any industrial

campaign in pursuit of these aims should be for our own reps to consider as part of their own bargaining arrangements with those employers.

Finally, it is important to note that both the Living Wage Foundation is UK-wide and London rates remain far below GMB's policy of what a real living wage should be, which is currently at least £15 per hour.

Turning to Motion 165, submitted in support of GMB London Young Workers Demand Fair Pay Campaign, the CEC commends the campaign and we stand against age-based discrimination in pay rates. Our qualifications are to restate that a universal genuine living wage should be £15 an hour in line with established GMB policy.

The second qualification is to note that the motion calls on GMB to take certain actions at the Labour Party Conference and at other Labour Party bodies. Voting positions at the Labour Party Conference are always set in line with this Congress's policy. Decisions over our own motions are subject to debate and scrutiny by the CEC Sub-Committees and it is important that these arrangements remain in place. GMB also needs the freedom to cooperate with other unions and establish joint trade union priorities through TULO in order to get its own policies adopted at the Labour Conference and in the Labour Party's manifesto. It is therefore important that GMB's representatives have the freedom to pursue our policy priorities through that process of negotiation.

Congress, please support the motions with the qualifications I have outlined. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Does London Region agree the qualification on Motion 160? (*Agreed*) And 164? (*Agreed*) And 165? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Wales and South West, do you accept the qualification on Motion 161? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will take them all as one vote. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 160 was CARRIED*

*Motion 164 was CARRIED*

*Motion 165 was CARRIED*

*Motion 161 was CARRIED*

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 14, Employment Policy: Rights at Work. Can I call the mover of Composite 8, please?

**CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH THE MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS BILL**

**COMPOSITE MOTION 8**

***(Covering Motions 109 and 110)***

**109 – Campaign to Abolish the Minimum Service Levels Bill – GMB**

**Scotland**

**110 – Minimum service Levels – Wales & South West Region**

**CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH THE MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS BILL**

This Congress notes with dismay and anger the renewed attacks on trade unions and workers set out in the government's anti-trade union "Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill"

This Congress notes:

- that the Minimum services bill passed by the UK government is a profound change to the current industrial relations framework across the UK.
- Gives the Secretaries of State power to set minimum service level in Health, Fire and Rescue, Education, transport, Decommissioning of nuclear facilities and Border security.
- Will affect all the home nations and devolved administrations.

This Congress believes:

- That this is a direct attack by the Tories on the trade union and Labour movement and the ability of workers to exercise their legal rights
- That this Bill gives unaccountable power to the secretary of state in the reserved areas to effectively negate strike action.
- That this bill runs roughshod over the current devolution deal, centralising more power with the secretaries of state in Westminster.

This Congress calls for GMB to:

- Commits to spearheading an effective response to all attacks on trade unions and workers; such action including holding demonstrations across the country, involving trades councils and other worker-led bodies
- Continue to work with the TUC, the Labour party and the devolved administrations to campaign against the bill as a whole
- Work with the next UK Labour government to repeal this bill, if passed, and the Trades union act 2017 and produce new legislation that promotes constructive industrial relations across the UK.
- Withdrawing support for politicians who don't work towards the removal of all anti-trade union laws, whilst supporting those politicians who support our fight and campaign.

**MOVING REGION: WALES & SOUTH WEST**

**SECONDING REGION: SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

SARAH ALLEN-A'HERNE (GMB Wales and South West): Congress, the Minimum Service Level Bill passed by the UK government is a profound change to the current industrial relations framework across the UK. The Bill gives the Secretaries of State power to set minimum service levels in-

house, fire and rescue, transport, education, decommissioning of nuclear facilities, and border security, which will directly affect all home nations in devolved administrations.

Last month we saw a string of defeats for the Government's Strike Minimum Service Levels Bill in the House of Lords. This legislation will allow ministers by regulation to impose minimum service levels on services within six sectors. A work notice issued by the employer would then name those individuals required to work and the duty to be undertaken. Those workers deemed to have breached the work notice would lose the legal protection usually given to strikes and could be sacked directly.

We said all along that this Bill threatens our fundamental right to strike. It is unnecessary and counterproductive, even in accordance to the Government's own impact assessment. It is anti-democratic, handing huge powers to ministers to dictate anti-strike service levels without proper parliamentary scrutiny. We have called for this Bill to be rejected and repealed. It was positive to see a combination of Labour, LibDem, cross-bench peers and bishops, vote in support of amendments that neutered the worst bits of this terrible legislation, including keeping the protection from unfair dismissal for individual workers who failed to comply with the forced work notices imposed by employers, removing the requirement on unions to have to encourage their own members to break strikes, taking devolved governments and service providers in Scotland and Wales out of the Bill.

The changes to the regulations overturn a decade long ban on agency workers replacing strikers and have been heavily criticised by all unions, agency employers, and parliamentarians. We have warned that the changes to the law will worsen industrial disputes, undermine the fundamental right to strike, and could endanger public safety if agency staff are required to fill safety critical roles but have not been fully trained.

The Recruitment and Employment Confederation which represents suppliers of agency workers describe the proposals as unworkable. The Lords Committee charged with scrutinising the legislation said the lack of robust evidence and the expected limited net benefit raised questions as to the practical effectiveness and benefit of the new rules. Colleagues, the Secretary of State for Business failed to consult unions as required by the Employment Agencies Act 1973 and violated fundamental trade union rights protected by Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Congress, this Tory government will continue to attack the rights of working people and suppress them into a controlled, exploited, and unsafe world of work and we will not let them do this. Please support this motion. I move.  
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sarah. A seconder, please?

GEORGE MACKIE (GMB Scotland): First-time delegate and speaker.  
(*Applause*) Congress, the Tories state that the Minimum Service Level Bill will limit the impacts of strike action and strike a balance between the rights of workers and the wider public but, Congress, union members are the public. Each of us here not only work in public services, we rely on healthcare workers, teachers, and transport workers, more so than any Tory MP does.

When a public sector union member goes on strike they do not do it just for themselves, they do it to preserve the services that the Tories are attacking. The Bill, therefore, threatens more than workers' collective right to strike, it threatens our ability to protect our public services for the generations to come. Article 11 of the European Charter on Human Rights outlines clearly the rights of freedom of assembly and association. It reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of their interests." The House of Lords have attempted to amend the Bill based on the Charter; they have been ignored by the Tories. They have also ignored honestly held concerns of their own backbenchers, the opposition, and House of Commons.

No doubt this whole Bill has been planned and executed in a WhatsApp group on another phone which no one can switch on again in the interests of national security. This is the thin edge of the wedge with many layers of vaguely disguised agenda designed to strip trade unions and their members of hard fought for rights. These rights, although written in charters and statutes, can easily be taken away. We cannot rely on politicians or parliaments, we only enjoy these rights so long as we exercise and protect them. That is the responsibility of every trade unionist across these islands. I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, George. Thank you. The mover of Composite 9, please? London Region, Composite 9?

**PROTECT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE FROM BEING MADE ILLEGAL FOR SOME SECTORS OF THE WORKFORCE**

**COMPOSITE MOTION 9**

***(covering Motions 111 and 112)***

**111 – The Government Wants to make it Illegal for some Sectors of the Workforce to go on Strike – London**

**112 – Protect the Right to Strike – London**

**PROTECT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE FROM BEING MADE ILLEGAL FOR SOME SECTORS OF THE WORKFORCE**

Congress notes that despite this Government's comments that "it absolutely believes in the right to strike", their Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill fails to stand up to this.

The Government is planning to announce Anti Strike Laws, which will allow employers to sack workers who take industrial action. Should the proposal go ahead, this could mean that employers could sack staff and as a result sue trade unions. If workers continue to strike, this would be deemed as a breach of contract, on their behalf.

This may not have an immediate effect on the strike events that are happening at present, in the NHS, Network Rail and other services, if they can reach a deal that will reduce the amount that the workers are asking for. It begs the question, "What does the future hold for trade unions and their rights?"

The cost of living and years of Tories austerity has left many workers, particularly those in the public sector, on low pay, zero hours, and predominantly from Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic, migrant backgrounds in despair, who in turn have been left with no option but to take strike action to protect and improve, not only their jobs but those of all workers no matter what sector.

We have spent decades building a safer environment for the workers to see it all taken away in just a flash. Are we going to let the government take control of the Union?

Congress notes that this Government's anti-Union Bill means that when workers democratically vote to strike, they could be forced to work and be sacked if they don't.

These new laws are an attack on working people's fundamental right to strike to defend their pay, terms and conditions.

This is unfair tactics which will inevitably strip workers of their rights and leave unions powerless.

Congress is asked to continue to:

1. Campaign to protect the Right to Strike by engaging with and supporting others.
2. Inform members of the GMB position by sending out bulletins/briefings when other unions are striking in their workplaces so that members are kept safe.
3. Campaign by working alongside appropriate decision makers and lobbying GMB backed MP's/House of Lords members to ensure that the right to strike is not eroded away.

Congress, we call on GMB and all other Unions to get the Government to think before they act. We must stop this from ever happening now and in the future.

**MOVING REGION: LONDON**

## SECONDING REGION: LONDON

*(Carried)*

WAYNE OSWICK (London): It has been a long day so I will not be too long. This Government are pushing ahead with an anti-trade union Bill stopping our right to strike. The nasty part of the rhetoric is based on the text users' inconvenience. Well, we have an education lesson for "Sunak", everyone in this hall are taxpayers. Also, those standing on the picket lines up and down the country as a last resort is because there is no other choice. Our nurses, ambulance workers, junior doctors, teachers, Amazon workers, rail workers, and the list goes on, as comrades stand strong against this Government and their employers. They shall stand. We will not be beaten. Together we make work better.

Our democratic rights have been under attack since the Trade Union Bill of 2014. This Government, part 5, are hell bent on taking the working class back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Congress, we know that after 13 years of Tory mismanagement and austerity this Government have finally failed the country. The workforce has been brought to its knees, the country is on its knees, a Brexit disaster, and an incompetent crash in the economy resulting in the biggest cost-of-living-crisis for 75 years. Food inflation is 19.1% and the highest energy rates ever seen before. As other factors take hold workers on moderate to low pay, many on zero hour contracts, are being forced to use food banks to get by. What alternative do we have other than to demand an inflation beating pay rise. We, the workforce, in both the public and private sector have suffered in real terms wage stagnation since 2016.

Congress, this is a call for action. Let's not meekly accept these attacks from the Far Right authoritarian Mad Hatter called Rees-Mogg, and his cronies from the ERG. Don't let our great founder turn in his grave at the thought the great GMB have lost their fight. We have the tools to campaign and show our strength. We will organise. We will grow. We will rally and march on parliament to show our disapproval and defiance, and also let's sign a petition of no confidence in this Government. We can campaign for an urgent general election. Our working people cannot afford another five years of a Tory government and it is time for them to go. Vote Labour, repeal the Trade Union Bill, save our working rights, and let's get Britain working again. Congress, I support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Wayne. I hope you were moving that; so there should be a seconder?

GODWIN ACASIER (London): Congress, it is a worker's fundamental right to protect and protest when under attack from employers, including the Government. This right is stated by the ILO under the global standards on labour rights. Limiting this fundamental right in any form, in any disguise, or in any settlement of this workers' right may have serious consequences for workers and the labour movement. This limitation should therefore not be allowed to stand.

Congress, the right to strike is a necessity and fundamental function of democracy. Many of the anti-strike measures that the Government is seeking to introduce have been rejected by the House of Lords. The Bill has faced a battery of criticisms from civil liberty organisations, race, gender, equality groups, human rights lawyers, and even many politicians around the world. If the changes are allowed to become law just attending a protest could lead to being served with a serious disruption prevention order restricting the right to protest. Any breach of the order could carry a prison term.

Congress, strike is the last resort and sometimes the only thing available for workers to protect themselves. It helps workers to avoid being at the complete mercy of employers. Any modification from what it is today will be rendered virtually ineffective and useless. The union cannot stand by and watch a worker's right to strike so attacked. We must protect the right to strike and should defend any and every worker who exercises the right to strike. Congress, support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Godwin. Mover of Motion 113? Could they come to the rostrum, and can I call for the mover and seconder of 106, Composite 7, Composite 10, Composite 11, and 168. They are the last motions of the day. Thank you.

## **IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE MOTION 113**

### **113. IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT TO STRIKE**

This Congress notes that on 16 January 2023, MPs voted in support of the Sunak Government's Minimum Service Level Bill, enabling this new anti-strike legislation to come up for a second reading.



If approved, the law will impose “minimum service levels” against unions and workers who take strike action in areas the government will define as ‘key sectors’. Every Union is threatened by this ‘right to scab’.

Congress notes that a Judicial review of this anti-worker legislation is expected to be heard later in March, and that the government does not have all legality on its side.

Congress believes that the High Court granted permission for the legal challenge brought by 11 trade unions (and TUC-coordinated) due to the resolve of millions of ordinary workers ready to fight without pay.

Although Keir Starmer says he would repeal this anti trade union legislation if Labour formed the next government, Conference believes this matter cannot wait until then.

We call on Congress to work with other key Unions to create a permanent and national Inter-Union campaign platform In Defence of the Right to Strike using our media and powered by trade union activists.

### **X59 NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH** **London Region**

*(Carried)*

GEORGE SHARKEY (London): Let’s be clear about the fight we are now in to defend the right to strike. The right of workers to withdraw their labour was never handed to us by employers, or the government. Since the mid-1800s the right to strike had to be fought for and defended repeatedly. We must remember and take inspiration from the generations of trade unions before us; they fought the very same battle and won. We must fight this Bill not only to protect the workers of today and tomorrow but honour our union’s past. GMB’s history stretches right back to the emergence of trade unionism in this country since the London Dock strikes in 1889, which our founder, Will Thorne, helped organise, to the strikes of today in workplaces like Amazon. GMB have never been afraid to support our members’ courage and strength in standing up to low pay and poor working conditions.

Strikers were prepared to make fundamental changes for better working conditions throughout history. Here is just two. The Match Girls Strike, 1888, after one worker was dismissed from the Bryant and May factory in Bow, London some 1,400 workers, predominantly women, staged a walkout. Within a couple of weeks the company bosses agreed to reinstate the worker as well as offering the workers improvements in pay and conditions.

Then there was the Battle of George Square in 1919 with unemployment rising due to reduction of the military needed after the War, trade union groups hoped to increase the number of jobs by reducing the number of

working week hours. The strike action was called by those in shipbuilding and engineering industries. The strike was centred on Glasgow's George Square and in the end workers secured a guaranteed 47-hour week. Look how far we have come from that.

There is one reason and one reason alone why the Government wants to make it more difficult to organise strikes, it is because strikes work, they improve the life of working people. There are some examples where they have become legislation and law because of action taken, the Health & Safety Act, the Equality Act, the National Minimum Wage, the National Living Wage, Maternity Pay, Working Time Directive, and Agency Directive.

To GMB members on strike now and in the future the message of this Congress is clear and loud from the picket line to parliament, we will fight with you and we will win. Please support. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, George. A seconder, please?

BISMILLA MAHOMED (London): Defend the right to strike. Instead of doing their job and getting to grips with the cost-of-living-crisis, and public services that are stretched to breaking point, the Tories are playing politics by attacking working people and the right to strike. We are in the middle of a cost-of-living-crisis, everyone is seeing their income squeezed and their standard of living fall as prices soar. That is why working people and their unions are standing up for proper pay rises. Nobody takes strike action lightly, only ever as a last resort when the Government have refused to negotiate on pay. What other choices do workers have?

The new legislation proposed by the Tory government intends to override a worker's right to withdraw their labour forcing them to work against their will. The right to strike is a fundamental democratic right; it underpins our ability to win dignity in the workplace and to earn a decent standard of living. It is no accident that this right is under attack at the very moment the public is fighting back against the cost of living squeeze. This Government is determined to force workers to pay the price for a crisis caused by greed of the elite yet again. We will not accept it. Congress, I second this motion. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bismilla. Is there anybody speaking in opposition? No? Then can I ask Warinder to respond on behalf of the CEC.

WARINDER JUSS (CEC): Responding to Composite 8, Composite 9, and Motion 113.

The CEC is supporting Composite 8 with just a couple of qualifications. The GMB has been steadfast in our opposition to the Strikes Minimum Service Levels Bill and we have already been working to oppose it, including working with the TUC. The first qualification relates to the cost implications of the further demonstrations which will need to be considered.

The second qualification is in relation to the motion asking the GMB potentially to withdraw support from some of the politicians. We believe that political affiliation and support for individual candidates should remain a regional matter so that we as a union can advance our members' interests in the most effective and best ways possible whilst taking into account the decisions made at Congress.

The CEC is also supporting Composite 9 with a minor qualification and that is that we may not always be aware of the strike actions being undertaken by other unions and so it is not always going to be possible for us to issue bulletins or briefings. Workplace reps are best placed to be aware of the industrial action taken by other unions and to inform members accordingly.

The CEC is also supporting Motion 113 with a qualification. The motion refers to judicial review. This judicial review is actually in relation to an ongoing case about the use of agency workers during industrial action in which GMB is also involved. We have already been campaigning strong and hard against this Bill and we have been working with the TUC, other trade unions, and with the Labour Party in our opposition to this Bill.

Congress, please support these motions, subject to the qualifications that I have outlined. Thank you so much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Warinder. Does Wales and South West accept the qualification on Composite 8? (*Agreed*) And Scotland? (*Agreed*) Thank you. And London on Composite 9, and Motion 113? (*Agreed*) I put all those to the vote. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? Thank you. All three motions are carried.

*Composite Motion 8 was CARRIED*  
*Composition Motion 9 was CARRIED*  
*Motion 113 was CARRIED.*

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK**

THE PRESIDENT: That moves on to section 15, which is Employment Policy: Rights at Work. Can I have the mover of Motion 106, please?

### **REPEAL ALL ANTI-UNION LEGISLATION MOTION 106**

#### **106. REPEAL ALL ANTI-UNION LEGISLATION**

This Congress notes and welcomes that the current Labour Party leadership have spoken out against the Tory government's latest draconian anti-strike legislation. They have told us, that if and when elected Labour will repeal this along with the 2016 Trade Union Act. Unfortunately, there is a noticeable silence on the Thatcherite anti-worker laws still in place.

We have been here before, we all know that Between 1980 and 1997, the Thatcher governments passed numerous Anti-Union Acts of Parliament, to restrict and weaken Trade Union powers. The fact is, that the United Kingdom already had, as a consequence of those laws, the most restrictive anti-union laws in Europe.

Disappointingly, from 1997 onwards, despite Labour's huge majority, and despite the party's continued dependence on union funds, Tony Blair and the incoming Labour government kept in place almost every aspect of the restrictive Tory acts and refused to repeal the Conservatives' anti-union laws.

The GMB demand that the Labour Party going into the next election does so, on a manifesto that ensures the full implementation of the future Labour Government's Green Paper on Employment Rights and the New Deal for Working People as agreed at Labour Conference 2021.

Furthermore, the GMB to re-commit to working in collaboration with our likeminded sister Unions and the TUC, to take appropriate actions, including withdrawal of funding, if necessary, to help to persuade the Labour Party when elected, to implement legislation that will guarantee rights and freedoms for Unions and workers and will mean the repeal of anti-union laws stretching back to the 1980s.

#### **B14 BANBURY NO1 BRANCH London Region**

*(Referred)*

STEPHEN ROBERTSON (London): Hello, Congress. Hello, Barbara. Brothers, sisters, comrades, this Congress welcomes that the current Labour Party leadership has spoken out against the latest shock in proposed Tory anti-strike legislation, and they have told us that if this legislation is passed when they are elected into government they will repeal this along with the 2016 Trade Union Act. Even though the Labour Party has committed to a

new deal for working people at Labour Conference that was developed in partnership with us, the trade unions, its contents are welcome by the trade union movement, obviously, and we welcome the fact that they are going to implement it within 100 days. It claims that the Labour Party will strengthen trade union rights and repeal anti-trade union laws and they will “upbeat trade union legislation so it is fit for a modern economy to empower working people”, whatever that means.

Unfortunately, it is not really going fully committed to abolish all of the Thatcher government’s anti-trade union acts of parliament and just between the ‘80s and ‘97 it restricted meeting trade union powers. Let’s not forget, comrades, that as a consequence of these laws we already have the most restrictive anti-union laws in Europe. Therefore, this Congress demands that the Labour Party go into the next election without any backtracking or watering down this new Green Paper, New Deal Green Paper, they must fully come out with the manifesto to ensure that they fully implement the new deal as agreed at the Labour Party Conference.

Congress, GMB also asks the CEC and senior management team to recommit to working with partners at the unions and the TUC and persuade the Labour Party to go one step further and to work with trade unions to implement legislation that will help to repeal all of those outdated anti-union laws that stretch back to the 1980s. The GMB should be prepared to consider taking any action deemed appropriate or necessary, including withdrawal of Labour Party funds if the Labour Party do not act in support of our best interests over issues relating to these restrictive anti-trade union laws.

The new General Secretary, Warren Kenny, his old man, he was not scared to stop their money and if I remember correctly he stopped about a million quid because they were not giving us a bang for a buck, so we should not be afraid to stop the money if they do not support us. I am asking you to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Just to clarify, Gary Smith is the new General Secretary. You said Warren Kenny; that is just to clarify. Secunder, please?

TOM REDNALL (London): First-time delegate, seconding our motion on union laws. (*Applause*) Congress, the truth is for the last few decades we have been fighting with one hand behind our back. Excessive laws have hindered our work, through our mission, effectively. We have heard some really good success stories over this Congress, successes where people

have gone into workplaces, organised strikes and won big for our union, for our members. It should not be made that hard to organise a strike.

Let's look at the Tory government's main argument for them and their laws. They think that we are greedy. They think we want to bankrupt companies but they could not be more wrong. Congress, let me be clear, GMB members are hard working, resilient, and they care about their work more so than their employers. Their arguments just do not stand. Earlier today we heard Keir Starmer admit that in the past Labour had drifted away from its mission. This time we will not let them. We will make sure that they repeal anti-trade union laws going back to the 1980s. Congress, I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tom. Mover of Composite 7?

**STOP THE EROSION OF WORKERS' RIGHTS TO WITHDRAW OUR LABOUR  
COMPOSITE MOTION 7  
(covering Motions 107 and 108)**

**107 – Stop the Erosion of Workers' Rights – London Region**

**108 – The Right to Withdraw our Labour – GMB Scotland**

**STOP THE EROSION OF WORKERS' RIGHTS TO WITHDRAW OUR LABOUR**

Congress knows that workers' rights and many more have been hard fought by the trade union movement and are pivotal to recruiting and retaining members; notes that if you want to strike you have to go through a procedure that the Tory government put in place years ago, it is now becoming the normal for the Tory government to think up new ways to stop the workers from fighting for what they are worth; and further notes that on 20 January 2023, this Government introduced two Bills which were an unprecedented attack on the ability of workers to enjoy a decent, secure and dignified working life.

We believe that this is an attack on all worker's rights, and the Tory government has to be challenged or for all workers in Britain to fight for their working rights.

There are workers all over Britain that are on strike, but it is the government that is not wanting to hear what they are saying, which is we want our rights back to withdraw our labour.

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill will wipe regulations such as Working Time protections, the right to holiday pay, the protection of agency workers, and measures relating to fixed term and part-time workers.

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill will remove the legal restrictions on the right to strike, a fundamental tool of the trade union movement, used always as a last resort. Under this Bill the Government will have unlimited power to set Minimum Service Levels (MSL) in strikes in six key sectors, including health, fire and rescue, education, and transport.

Congress notes that the Thatcher Government had already introduced the most restrictive laws on trade unions in the Western world.

Congress notes that the Trade Union Act 2016 imposed further restrictions, including recent regulations permitting agency workers to be hired to break strikes, and the limit on damages payable by trade unions to be fourfold.

We want to take action for what we believe is our democratic right to strike.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 would enable regulations to be introduced making organising, calling and participating in a strike a criminal offence.

The Nationality and Borders Act may strip citizenship from six million inhabitants and the Government plans to repeal the Human Rights Act to remove fundamental rights.

We ask congress:

- To work with MPs and MSPs to get the antistrike laws repealed.
- To join the TUC and STUC to campaign to protect our right to strike.
- To continue to resist the onslaught on the trade union movement through awareness raising and working alongside appropriate decision makers to prevent any further erosions of workers' rights.

**MOVING REGION: LONDON**

**SECONDDING REGION: SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

BISMILLA MAHOMED (London): Erosion of workers' rights in the UK emboldens authoritarian regimes around the world. It is quite unusual for the International Labour Organisation, the ILO, to get name checked in parliament but earlier this year the Secretary of State, Grant Shapps, declared that the ILO, or guardian of workers' rights around the world, as he calls them, believe that his proposal for minimal service levels to be enforced in the event of strikes in six different sectors were, "appropriate ways of balancing the right to strike or the need to protect the wider public". But Mr. Shapps' proposals go way beyond the ILO supervisory system of global labour standards as ever sanctioned. While the ILO grudgingly allows minimum service levels in certain cases, it insists that they are always negotiated between unions and employers, or failing that decided by a genuinely independent arbitrator.

The Government's proposals, on the other hand, would hand that power to just one individual, the Secretary of State himself, with little or no accountability but a good deal of vested interest. Mr. Shapps will be able to set a minimum service level that potentially renders the strike utterly ineffective and essentially meaningless. The right to strike enshrined in many international human rights instruments has always had to be fought for but in recent years there has been a grim struggle for unions to defend

their most significant means of demonstrating the power of the working people. We call upon Congress to lobby GMB-backed MPs to call out the power grab at the centre of this plan. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bismilla. GMB Scotland to second?

JAMIE MOORE (GMB Scotland): This Tory government is trying to force the anti-union laws to sack key workers through parliament as quickly as possible. The Government are trying to take away our freedom, the freedom to be heard, the freedom to declare an opinion, and the freedom to stand up and make a noise and refuse to accept that the action is acceptable. We are living in a country divided by those who have and those who have not. It is estimated that 22% of the UK's population are living in poverty, that is an estimated 14.5 million people in this country struggling to feed their children and meet the ever increasing cost of living. Is it any wonder that our NHS workers, ambulance drivers, train drivers, are saying, enough is enough.

GMB members are making their voices heard by taking to the street in protest and picketing their workplaces. This is all right. They have a right to demand change, they have a right to challenge conditions, they have a right to expect a better standard of living for their family, and also a right to strike. It is fair to say that this country has not seen so much protest and disillusionment in 30 years. We have nurses grappling with their conscience on whether to walk out, we have teachers leaving the classroom to picket at school gates, and we have transport workers bringing this country to a halt, all because they need to be heard.

Congress, this Government are not listening. Staging this as a form of expression, as a recognised way of employing the right to freedom of speech, is in jeopardy. It is workers arrested, or be silent. I will be finished in two seconds. What we need is open negotiation, further discussions, and acknowledgement of workers, not forced to silence but can protest and seek to bring about economic change that is both fair and just. Instead of recognising the needs of key workers who provide fundamental services of society, they know the cost-of-living-crisis shows no signs of easing and the trade unions will be the vanguard in the fight against low wages and poverty for years to come. They are up for the fight and GMB and the trade union movement are up for it too. Please support. (*Applause*)



THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Jamie. That was a bit longer than two seconds but I will let you off. If nobody wants to speak against, can I ask Rachel Hookway to speak on behalf of the CEC.

RACHEL HOOKWAY (CEC): Congress, GMB has a longstanding policy in support of the right to organise industrial action without the threat of legal proceedings by employers, and for workers who take industrial action to be protected from dismissal.

Motion 106 asks for specific action to be taken in respect of the Labour Party, including potentially a withdrawal of funding. The manifesto process is ongoing and GMB will soon be conducting important negotiations as part of the process. We are, therefore, asking that the motion be referred so that it can be considered in more detail by the Political European and International Sub-Committee of the CEC.

The CEC is also supporting Composite 7 with a small qualification that in our campaigns against this legislation we should work with the wider trade union movement as well as the TUC and STUC.

Therefore, Congress, we ask that Motion 106 to be referred and that Composite 7 is supported with the qualification I have outlined. Thank you.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Cheers, Rachel. London, do you agree to refer Motion 106? (Agreed) Thank you. There will be no vote on that motion. London, do you agree the qualification on Composite 7? (Agreed) And GMB Scotland? (Agreed) Thank you. I will put Composite 7 to the vote. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 106 was REFERRED*  
*Composite Motion 7 was CARRIED.*

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK**

THE PRESIDENT: We now have our final group of three motions this afternoon on Employment Policy: Rights at Work. Can I have the mover of Composite 10, please. Every second will count now as to what time we finish.

## **TORIES BONFIRE OF EU WORKER RIGHTS AND SAFETY – REPEAL THE REVOCATION AND REFORM BILL COMPOSITE MOTION 10**

**(covering Motions 114, 115, 169 )**

**114 – Tories Bonfire of the EU Worker rights and Workplace Safety – London Region**

**115 – Repeal the European Reform Laws Bill – London Region**

**169 – The Revocation and Reform Bill – London Region**

**TORIES BONFIRE OF EU WORKER RIGHTS AND SAFETY – REPEAL THE REVOCATION AND REFORM BILL**

This Congress is appalled by the actions of the Tory government in seeking to destroy all of the legislation adopted transferred into UK law following our departure from the European Union.

This Congress notes that the Tory plans to scrap most EU laws by the end of 2023, to show that Brexit is being delivered, risk causing untold legal chaos and yet more damage to British businesses.

The Revocation and Reform Bill will allow potentially the enabling of deregulation of workers' rights without effective scrutiny, laws and protections workers currently have rights to.

The new Act may also damage our terms of Trade and Co-operation Agreement with the EU.

With the country still reeling from the effects of Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's disastrous minibudget last year followed by Jeremy Hunt's Autumn Statement where he picked the pockets of the working masses to pay for tory mistakes.

Ministers are facing mounting opposition from business groups, environmentalists, legal experts, unions and opposition parties to what is being described as another dangerous, ideologically driven experiment by pro-Brexit Tory right wingers.

The retained EU law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, spearheaded by Jacob Rees-Mogg is one of the most significant bills ever to come before MPs, with powers to expunge laws ranging from workers rights to regulatory protection for the environment without even a debate in Parliament.

This bonfire of the EU Regulations and EU Directives, could open the way for employers to attack our terms and conditions, removing the automatic rights to things like a maximum number of working hours, a minimum of four weeks holidays, parental leave, equality etc.

The bonfire could mean that the employer could employ someone without anything in writing, bully them and treat them differently to colleagues. The loss of the minimum workplace safety directive 1989 could make going to work a far more dangerous thing to do and if we lose the Retirement Provision Directive workers could end up with no automatic right to a company pension. Also, the loss of the Insolvency Protection Directive 2008 will mean that the Government could pay lip service in its protection of these pension funds, if the company goes into liquidation.

What is more the bonfire could remove the rights to bargain collectively and take strike action without fear of discrimination or the loss of your job. One only has to look at the latest piece of anti-strike, anti-trade union rights, drafted by this government to see that under a Tory Government they seek to destroy trade unions, and force workers to work themselves into an early grave.

Under the Bill, British workers will lose the following rights:

- Pay related rights from the first day of employment .
- Working time rights from the first day of employment.

- Family related rights from the first day of employment.
- Family related rights from 26 weeks of continuous employment.
- Equal treatment rights for “atypical workers“ from the first day of employment.
- Rights for agency workers after 12 weeks in the same job for the same hirer.
- Equality rights from the first day of employment.
- Job protection rights.
- Trade union rights from day one of employment.
- Congress calls on the Central Executive Council to:
- Investigate every legal angle to oppose this Governments actions
- Highlight the actions of the UK Government at every opportunity to obtain condemnation of this government’s actions.
- call on central Government to bring forward a detailed set of proposals where laws need to be improved.
- call on our Labour MPs to insist at the very least, full scrutinising of all workers’ rights law changes.
- believe that the Government should allow MPs sufficient time and power to scrutinise these proposals.
- call on the GMB, it’s Labour MPs and all unions to publicise, demonstrate and highlight the pitfalls and damage this law will do if UK Law changes are left unchecked.

GMB calls on the government to stop this Bill as it will only further destroy our country. These are just some of the rights that this bill will abolish. Let’s abolish the Bill.

**MOVING REGION: LONDON**  
**SECONDING REGION: LONDON**

*(Carried)*

BISMILLA MAHOMED (London): Again, third time! This Congress notes that the Tory plans to scrap most EU laws by the end of 2023 to show that Brexit is being delivered, risk causing untold legal chaos and yet more damage to British businesses. With the country still reeling from the effects of Liz Truss’s and Kwasi Kwarteng’s disastrous mini-budget last year followed by Jeremy Hunt’s Autumn Statement where he pick-pocketed the working masses to pay for Tory mistakes. Ministers are facing mounting opposition from business groups and environmentalists, and legal experts, unions, and opposition parties, to what is being described as “another dangerous ideologically driven experiment by pro-Brexit Tory right-wingers.”

The retained EU Law Revocation and Reform Bill, spearheaded by Jacob Rees-Mogg, is one of the most significant Bills ever to come before MPs with powers to expunge laws ranging from workers' rights to regulatory protection for the environment without even a debate in parliament. Under the Bill, British workers will lose the following rights: pay related rights from the first day of employment; working time rights from the first day of employment; family related rights from the first day of employment; equal treatment rights for atypical workers from the first day of employment, that is for agency workers after 12 weeks in the same job for the same hirer; equality rights from the first day of employment; job protection rights; trade union rights from day one of employment.

GMB calls on the Government to stop this Bill as it will further destroy our country. These are just some of the rights this Bill will abolish. Let's abolish the Bill. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Brilliant. Thank you, Bismilla. A Secunder?

DAVE LEVY (London): The Conservative's EU Law Revocation Reform Bill sometimes known as RULE, or the Conservative's Revocation EU Law, CRUEL, was introduced by Jacob Rees-Mogg during the doomed Truss administration. It seeks to sunset over 4,000 laws. Originally, it was going to be 2,500 but someone looked in a cupboard in the national archives and found another 1,500. Somehow it is meant to be about taking back control but it shows the taking back control was never about us. It is about the implementation of a fake nirvana for the vulture capitalists, for the Singapore on Thames, with zero employment protection laws, weak unions, a strong and violent police force, an oppressive criminal code, and a subjugated working class.

The law that repeals these laws, unless saved or varied by the Government ministers, the variation powers are known as Henry VIII powers because that is when they were invented and that is where they should have stayed. It is governed by decree so extreme the businesses are lobbying against it. It came from the fevered imagination of one of the most inappropriate people ever to become an MP, Jacob Rees-Mogg, and this award is a difficult one to win given the lack of talent and propriety in the parliamentary Tory Party. There is a list of the rights in jeopardy but reading that list reminds me of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which guarantees every worker has a right to working conditions which respect

his or her health, safety, and dignity. It also, of course, has an independent court which will enforce it across the whole of Europe.

This is the last throw of a dice from players on a losing streak. We must stop this or if we fail until the next Labour government remediates this degradation in our rights. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Mover of Composite 11?

## **DEFENDING A NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS**

### **COMPOSITE MOTION 11**

***(covering Motions 116 and 117)***

**116 – A Fair Deal at Work – London Region**

**117 – Defending a New Deal for Workers**

## **DEFENDING A NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS**

Congress notes that workers and trade union rights are under attack from the Conservative Government including the latest anti-Strikes Bill and that the Labour Party has committed to repeal any new anti-strike legislation introduced by the Conservative Government.

Congress notes and welcomes that in Labour's "A new deal for working people" they say they will strengthen the protections afforded to all workers by banning zero-hours contracts, outlawing bogus self-employment; and ending qualifying periods for basic rights, which leave working people waiting up to two years for basic protections. This will include unfair dismissal, sick pay, and parental leave, giving working people under Labour rights at work from day one."

Congress further notes and welcomes that the document states that "Restrictions on union activity are holding back living standards and the economy. We will update trade union legislation so it is fit for a modern economy and empower working people to collectively secure fair pay, terms and conditions." It also states that "Unions have been subjected to increasingly restrictive rules, most recently in the Trade Union Act 2016, which included arbitrary thresholds in industrial action ballots; complicated balloting and notice rules designed to make industrial action and union organising more difficult; and new restrictions on pickets."

The Labour Party in government has further committed to legislate for Labour's 'New Deal for Working People' within 100 days of office which includes:

- > Repealing anti-trade union legislation, including the Trade Union Act 2016.
- > Using public procurement to support good work.
- > Overseeing the biggest wave of insourcing of public services for a generation.
- > New collective and trade union access rights, and sectoral collective bargaining.
- > Banning zero hours contracts.
- > Outlawing fire and rehire.

We note the union's policy extends to

1. Campaigning against any further weakening of employment and trade union rights and to engage with its Parliamentary Group to ensure their support for these policies. Furthermore, we oppose any Government proposals to opt out of EU regulations and social and employment protections for workers as proposed by the EU retained laws bill or to further restrict the right to strike in the Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.
2. The right to organise industrial action, including solidarity action and action for broader social and political demands, without the threat of legal proceedings by employers and for workers taking lawful industrial action to be protected from dismissal.
3. The right to choose freely how to decide on industrial action, including by workplace ballots and other means, with the abolition of restrictive balloting and industrial action notice procedures.
4. To secure these and other rights, repeal of all anti-trade union laws, not just the most recent ones.

We welcome Labour's commitments to repeal anti-union laws; we affirm our call for this to mean repeal of all anti-union/anti-strike laws.

We welcome Labour's promise to meet the GMB's policy of full employment rights from day one of employment.

We note GMB's current policy that the National Minimum Wage should be at least £15 an hour and that Labour's "A fair deal ..." promises only £10, which is now lower than the real living wage and only 40p higher than the national minimum wage.

We note that GMB's current policy is to call for fundamental reform of Statutory Sick Pay so that no worker is forced to come into work when they are sick. It may be appropriate to calculate SSP on the basis of GMB's call for a Real Living Wage of at least £15 an hour, or on a proportion of average earnings.

We note the GMB policy on redundancy consultation and calls for the repeal of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation Act 1992) Order and restore redundancy consultations for large scale redundancies to 90 days to be part of Labour's manifesto.

Congress believes:

> The commitments from the Labour Party on more worker and trade union rights are not guarantees and the commitments to legislate Labour's 'New Deal for Working People' in full will come under pressure from external and internal opponents of working people and trade unions, with attempts to weaken or reduce commitments made. > That any attempts should be resisted and commitments set out in Labour's 'New Deal for Working People' should be implemented within 100 days in full.

Congress calls on:

> GMB union to prioritise the commitments on trade union collective rights and individual workers rights as set out in Labour's 'New Deal for Working People' in future manifesto negotiations with the Labour Party.

> To resist attempts to reduce or weaken Labour's commitment to legislate the 'New Deal for Working People' in full within 100 days, and to work with unions and other allies to defend these commitments.

> To hold a future Labour government to account on its commitments around worker and trade union rights.

We instruct the General Secretary & CEC to campaign for these demands to be in the next Labour Manifesto and for GMB delegates to the NPF, Annual Conference, & Clause V meetings, together with all GMB sponsored MPs/PPCs to ensure that these policies are placed in the manifesto.

**MOVING REGION: LONDON**

**SECONDING REGION: NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER**

*(Carried)*

DAVE LEVY (London): Congress, thank you for your tolerance. The best defence against poor working conditions and low wages is a strong union movement, it has been since the Labour Party foundation, and the political and legislative programmes are also needed, a fundamental principle of the organisation of the Labour Party and the establishment of political funds by trade unions.

There are many roles in UK employment protection law and those members whose cases I helped to manage are often deeply upset that Britain, their perceived home of fair play, has so few remedies for the poor disgraceful treatment they were suffering. One of my fellow delegates from London yesterday talked about the bullying and victimisation causing mental health, the destruction of a life. This is not uncommon. I see a lot of it.

Labour's new deal for working people is an important statement of the Labour Party's intention to rebalance the scales. I congratulate those GMB activists and officers that participated in its development as it includes an important commitment to meeting longstanding GMB policies. The document proposes the repeal of anti-trade union laws and our motion calls on the GMB sponsored MPs continue to oppose further restrictions, including RULE, which we just dealt with, and the Strike Minimum Services Bill, which we have also just dealt with.

GMB policy includes calling for the listing of restrictions on solidarity action and action for broader social and political aims. It is really important that where we are strong we can support those that are weak. GMB policy calls for unions to be able to choose how they consult their members on industrial action. This is equally important where instantaneous response is required to some management provocations. We welcome the commitment to establish employment rights on day one and note that Labour's National Policy Forum repeats this commitment. The two documents also promise to abolish zero hour contracts. These are good

documents but we need to ensure that the promises made make it into a manifesto into government.

The major disappointment is the new deal document promise on minimum wage is unlikely to increase it. We must note the Tories have stolen the living wage label and applied it to the minimum wage. GMB policy is that it must be £15 an hour. We must reiterate this so we must push the Labour Party to adopt this position. I do a lot of personal casework and that experience has allowed me to see the inadequacy of statutory sick pay and redundancy compensation. Promises to rectify these injustices would be welcome.

The MPS report is also weaker on trade union rights and GMB policy. GMB should be looking to push the Labour Party to do better. The continued use of a specific and a limited list raises fear that Labour's leadership growing reputation for flexibility will mean we do not get what we need and will not get what is right. The purpose of this motion is to restate our position to increase the negotiation power of our representatives in Labour's policy making process.

London Region has agreed to accept the CEC qualification and while we accept the need for agility the reason for moving the motion was hopefully passing it to establish our demands. I am assured the policy department ensures the policy is known by a representative and Kevin Buchanan's earlier commitment that policy would be on the table and would be negotiated; he too asked for flexibility to allow a consistent TULO position. Agility, though, must not become supine compromise. The reason we passed these motions is to have them implemented into law. I move.  
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dave. Thank you. And the seconder from NE, Yorkshire & Humber?

CRAIG THOMPSON (NE, Yorkshire & Humber): I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) You are far too kind. Thank you. I have been on strike as a council worker. My wife has been on strike as a teacher. My sister has been on strike as a nurse. My Dad has been on strike, he worked at the shipyards, and Granddad has been on strike working in the pits. Our struggles never stop. It has never missed a generation.

The first recorded strike was 1152 BC when the Egyptian tunnel makers withdrew their labour because the families were not getting paid, and the



families were suffering. This deal, we have heard Keir Starmer talk about this deal today, the new working deal for people, I do not have to go on talking about how much of a benefit it is to us scrapping zero hour contracts, end of bogus self-employment, it is really, really good.

So, what we need to do is we have to get a lot of protest about this. There is going to be a lot of things written in the press and there are going to be a lot of things trying to stop this going through. When I went on strike in 2011, a commentator on BBC said that I would take – we were talking about non-strike workers – he said, “I would take them outside and execute them in front of their families.” This is the type of thing that we are going to face.

So, what we call for today is Congress I call GMB to prioritise the commitment on trade union collective rights and individual workers’ rights as set out in the New Labour Deal for working people in future manifestos. I call for the Labour Party to resist attempts to reduce or weaken Labour’s power to legislate the new working deal for people within 100 days and to work with unions and other allies and defend their commitments, and Congress, lastly, this is for me the most important one, I call to hold a future Labour government to account on its commitment to our workers in trade union rights. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Craig. Then the mover, Dave, to move 168, please.

## **TRADE, JOBS, AND THE EUROPEAN UNION MOTION 168**

### **168. TRADE, JOBS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Congress notes:

1. that 25,000 people are working in ports and docks, now in competition with ports on continental Europe
2. that Horizon Europe funded €5.1bn to UK research
3. that UK is the world's second most powerful University sector and its pre-eminence is jeopardised by exclusion from Erasmus+ & Horizon Europe
4. many thousands of financial services jobs have moved from the UK to the EU
5. that the Tory ‘Hard Brexit’ has led to reduced foreign inward investment, a worsening balance of trade, reduced employment, a labour shortage in many industries, particularly social care, agriculture, hospitality and the NHS, and sterling has lost value against both the dollar and the euro.

6. That opinion polls are reporting a long-term trend that the Tory Brexit is no longer supported by a majority of the population
7. that the labour shortages are compounded by xenophobia and the Tories' morally disgraceful "hostile environment"
8. that there are over 3m EU citizen's living in the UK, many of whom will have come to be restricted by the measures of the hostile environment and the discrimination introduced by the withdrawal agreement.

Congress believes:

1. That in order to reverse the damage done by Brexit, we must advocate re-joining the European Single Market and Customs Union.
2. That restoring free movement between the UK and EU would be a benefit, socially and economically, not a cost.

Congress calls on the Labour Party:

1. to call for a new relationship with the EU involving the adoption of the single market and customs Union
2. to campaign in opposition and in Government to rejoin Horizon Europe and Erasmus+
3. to call for the repeal of the cruel hostile environment.

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

**X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH**  
**London Region**

*(Carried)*

DAVE LEVY (London): I need to thank my co-delegate, Liz Miller, for the joke about three is a charm. As I said previously when I have had to speak so frequently in a single debate session I do not do the timetables. Last month Nigel Farage said the Brexit had failed, so thanks, Nigel. There is a growing realisation that this is actually so and they say that even a stopped clock is right twice a day. The UK is 4% poorer from being outside the European Union Customs Union and Single Market. There is reduced foreign inward investment, jobs are moving overseas, the inequality of the UK means that our poorer cohorts are now poorer than Poland, and Ireland is growing economically at a faster rate than the UK. Our balance of trade has been poor for decades and it has got worse but others are less keen on funding it, and the currency is falling again against the world's leading currencies. We have labour shortages in many industries, from social care to agriculture, from hospitality to the NHS. We lost jobs in ports and in financial services, and other areas, as companies moved to Europe

because Europe has imposed a customs check for our trade goods to the EU while we have not been able to reciprocate.

The economy is not doing well and the cost-of-living-crisis is worsened by the income and wealth inequalities in our society, which is not the fault of Brexit but is the fault of the designers of Brexit. It would be ironic if it were not causal that the fastest growing region of the UK today is Northern Ireland, which is now a member of both the Customs Union and the Single Market. One of the key factors in economic growth, though, is the university sector and that needs to re-enter Horizon, which is the RNT agreement, and Erasmus, which is the student exchange agreement. It needs to be able to employ the best in the world and it is another sector where free movement of labour is an explicit and necessary benefit. We need to re-enter the Customs Union and align with the Single Market. The formulation of a closer and better relationship is not good enough. Sunak can probably live with that, as can other Tories, certainly other Tories. These demands, that of the Custom Union and the Single Market, should be GMB's policy and that of the government in the next parliament. My fear is that if Labour do not ask for this as a mandate they will find it hard to execute.

On free movement I need to say, first of all, that it needs to be reciprocal. Abandoning it has inhibited our people, our members' ability to work in the EU and to travel on holiday. Secondly, the second best defence against low wages is strong unions. An immigration policy is no substitute for strong unions and a national living wage. We should note that the current working visas that exist today tie people to jobs, thus inhibiting them joining a union and fighting for their rights. This discrimination damages our ability to organise. The cruel hostile environment works, or works to the extent that it dissuades people from coming to the UK to work and discriminates against those who do. For those who have to pay health charges and visa fees, these are exceedingly high as many people in this hall will know. They are designed to be cruel and punitive. The idea of charging people thousands of pounds for health treatment for their children is just beyond the pale, really.

GMB has policy to oppose the cruel and hostile environment but we need Labour front benchers to say so too. We need to get this right and so does the Labour Party. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. A seconder?

JOE DHARAMPAL-HORNBY (London): First-time delegate, now second-time speaker. Around three-quarters of people age 18-24 voted to remain in the Brexit referendum, believing in opportunity and prosperity for them and their generation lies in the EU. Sadly, the Tories hard Brexit has so far proved them right. The UK withdrawal from Horizon Europe and Erasmus has weakened opportunities in academic and scientific collaboration. Musicians, performers, and other artists now find it much harder to travel and work throughout Europe; likewise, for European artists seeking to perform in the UK. The cost-of-living-crisis has been worsened by the increased barriers to trade for UK businesses into the EU and vice versa. It has become much more difficult for UK residents to live and work in the EU, prevented from sharing ideas, culture, and experiences.

Our country voted to leave the EU and we have now left. This motion does not seek to change that. Instead, this is about making Brexit work for millions of people, young and otherwise, across the country, improving trade relations, strengthening scientific collaboration, and ridding our immigration and refugee systems of any hostile environment policy, to build a stronger economy, increased opportunity, and improve our relationship with our European partners. Please support this motion.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joe. I am assuming, Andy, you are coming up to oppose? Yes? Can you make it clear which one you are opposing?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Opposing Motion 168. Comrades, this seems to be something we debate every year, that in 2016 this country voted to leave the European Union and about half of our members voted that way in the referendum, and in 2019 one of the things that was really damaging to the Labour Party was that many people felt that the Labour Party was looking both ways and not respecting the massive democratic vote. I think this is really divisive to re-open the issue. We do need a new and better relationship with the European Union but the people have spoken, we have left the European Union, and what this motion calls for us to do is to align the policies of the incoming Labour government to the closest possible relationship we can have with the EU without being a member of it, so we would just have to follow their rules, but I think that that will be a politically disastrous position for the Labour Party to take in the next election. I was a chair of the Brexit Group which we had in this union and we took a really mature position in that we all debated and we respected all points of view. So many of our members voted to leave the EU, they had legitimate concerns, the EU had not been for many years an organisation that was

promoting the Social Chapter and promoting workers' rights. We had *Lavell* and other judgments which were very, very difficult for working people and tried to restrict employment rights.

Colleagues, I ask you to oppose this motion. I absolutely do not want to go through more and more years arguing about the EU when we should be taking on bosses, taking on the Tory government, and improving things for our members. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Dave, you do have the right of reply. Two minutes.

DAVE LEVY (London): Thank you, Andy. We had a spat last year about this issue. The fact is that I and the people that are supporting this motion and brought it here consider leaving to be a disaster and what I said to you last year is that that was then, this is now. Polls are showing growing support to the belief that leaving the EU was wrong. What this motion proposes is we rectify that on economic grounds. There have been two elections since that referendum. That mandate is dead. One of the reasons that we failed to get full advantage from the Social Chapter was that a Labour government, a Labour government, negotiated exemptions from the Justice Pillar and the Social Chapter because they were worried that the employment laws commitments within the European Social Chapter would be in breach of what they wanted to do. This is the right thing to do and I would ask Congress, too, to support that. Exit from the European Union and the Single Market is causing massive economic damage and I made argument as to why we should rejoin, and the advantages of rejoining in the proposal speech. I think I will leave it there. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. The CEC is supporting with qualifications and I will ask Kevin Jones to come up and respond on behalf of the CEC, please.

KEVIN JONES (CEC): Responding on Composites 10 and 11, and Motion 168. The CEC is supporting Composite 10 and largely support the calls of the motion, and we wish to see it out. Our total opposition is to the Minimum Services Level Bill. The complication is that while the Bill can be opposed in its entirety there may be other legal routes to opposing it. GMB is a campaigning organisation and is in opposition.

Composite 11 raises the importance of the Labour Party's new deal for working people. GMB is deeply involved in the creation of that document.

The union's political officers are currently working to include its contents in the document that they will be working on at this year's Labour Party Conference in October. We are fully square behind the new deal. However, our qualification is to ask that Congress recognises there are ongoing negotiations and discussions in this area. These discussions will continue through to the point that the manifesto will be agreed. Our representatives will leave you the freedom to respond to events and conduct mainly from negotiations and the auditors can have as many priorities in the next manifesto as possible.

The CEC is supporting Motion 168 with the following qualifications. The GMB has existing policy on our report to the result of the 2016 referendum. When Congress debated this in June 2018 it believed that the result of the 2016 referendum must have been honoured and we should have remained in the Customs Union with tariff-free access to the Single Market. Without a reminder of our commitments to establish duty-free, Congress, we should be close in line with the opponents of the right to standards in the EU for the benefit of our members and the existing policy on rejoining Erasmus, plus the student exchange system, and the Horizon in Europe science programme. Congress, it also divides the immigration policies, including the aggregation of points based on the system that is divisive for working class communities. At the same time you are aware that freedom of movement has been exploited by some employers to undercut wages and conditions. Congress, please support the qualifications that I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. London, do you agree the qualification on Composite 10? (*Agreed*) Thank you. And Composite 11? (*Agreed*) And NE, Yorkshire & Humber on Composite 11? (*Agreed*) Thank you. And London on Motion 168? (*Agreed*) I cannot take the vote as one because there has been opposition but I can take Composite 10 and Composite 11 as one vote. All those in favour please show? Thank you. All those against? Those are both carried.

*Composite Motion 10 was CARRIED*

*Composite Motion 11 was CARRIED*

THE PRESIDENT: Again to remind you the CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification so can I take the vote on Motion 168. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 168 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. That, delegates, is the end of Congress today. It has been a long day. We got through a lot of business. Can I thank you for your cooperation, your patience, and your concentration. Have a good evening and see you tomorrow at 9.30, please.

*Conference adjourned.*