

**GMB**

**CONGRESS 2024**

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

.....

**Held in:**

**The Bournemouth International Conference Centre  
Bournemouth**

**on:**

**Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**-and-**

**Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

.....

**PROCEEDINGS**

**DAY TWO**

**(Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024)**

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**SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024**

**MORNING SESSION**

**(Congress assembled at 9 a.m.)**

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, could I ask you to take your seats, please. Delegates, can I call Congress to order. Thank you, everybody, for making the early start this morning. I hope you all had a good evening last night. Thank you to everyone who came to the President's and Vice President's do. It was lovely to see so many people there.

I have just a quick couple of announcements. I have just heard that anybody in the gallery who wants to use their phone, or take phone calls, could you please sit outside because it makes it easier for anybody in the gallery to hear the speeches if people are not talking on their phones. That would be really appreciated. Thank you.

I have been told that the FGM fringe has been cancelled and further to say thank you to London Region for the supply of popcorn this morning on the top table. Yesterday it was Wales & South West gave us sweets. Not that I am asking any other region for anything but thank you very much.

I understand that the Standing Orders Committee have another report to Congress so can I invite Karen Dudley to the rostrum to move Standing Orders Committee Report No.3.

### **STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO.3**

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been informed that the following motions have been withdrawn. These are: Motion 46, Trade Union Education Cuts from Southern Region, Motion 104, Trade Union and Employment Rights from Wales & South West Region.

Existing policy motions. The SOC has confirmed that Motion 199, Mental Wellbeing for the Future Workforce, is existing policy and should be endorsed without the need for debate.

Emergency Motions. The SOC has accepted an Emergency Motion and this is Emergency Motion 1, NHS Pay, standing in the name of North East, Yorkshire, & Humber Region. The time for the Emergency Motion will be advised.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Anybody wish to come up and speak against the report? No? In that case, can I take a vote on the Standing Orders Committee Report No.3, all those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you, Karen.

*Standing Orders Committee Report No.3 was CARRIED.*

## **LOCAL GIFT – MIDLANDS REGION**

THE PRESIDENT: That takes us on to the Local Gift. This year it is Midlands and Congress selected by Midlands Region the recipient of the Congress 2024 Local Gift of £2,000 is St. Luke's Hospice in Cheshire, which is the Hospice who provided our Organiser, Michelle McCrossen, with support before her passing in October 2023 so a really fitting recipient of the gift. A presentation for the charity will follow Congress in the region. However, Midlands, you want to say a few words, I believe? I have been told that somebody wants to make a short speech.

JACQUELINE MURPHY (Midlands): Good morning, President, Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the region in accepting the Congress Local Gift for 2024. Each and every fight for equal pay started with a woman standing up and holding those in power to account. For the women workers of Birmingham City Council that woman was Michelle McCrossen. When Michelle took over responsibility for the council she found a glaring disparity in pay that had been ignored for years. She had the bravery to stand up and to start asking questions. With a tenacity that became her trade mark Michelle's questions uncovered years of direct discrimination against women workers. Even though she was still ignored by the council bosses, she refused to give up. She started a campaign that shook the council. For the first time women workers had a champion that would make sure their voice was heard. For the first time women workers had the route to start the fight back. The campaign that Michelle started was built not just around a legal challenge but around taking that fight into workplaces. Michelle reminded us that we are a union. We are built around workers' strength and solidarity. We will win when we organise in workplaces. We lost Michelle to cancer last year but her strength and commitment lives on in the campaign that she started. Her legacy is that over 3,000 women workers have lodged equal pay claims in Birmingham City Council. It is the workers from 35 schools who stood together and took strike action to fight for equal pay. It will be in the GMB victory that wins back the money our women workers have had robbed from their pockets. As a tribute to Michelle we are proud to accept the Congress Local Gift and we will be donating the gift to St. Luke's Hospice in Cheshire in memory of Michelle McCrossen. Thank you.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I went up to Birmingham when those women took strike action and it was such an amazing day to see women who have never been on strike before taking action and feeling empowered, so a real legacy that Michelle has left those women, and victory to them. Thank you.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: GENERAL**

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to Motions 186, 187, 188 so could I ask the movers and seconders to come down. These motions are under Social Policy: General, and could the mover of Motion 186 come straight to the rostrum, please. Thank you.

### **MOTION 186**

#### **LOW LEVEL LETTER BOXES**

##### **186. LOW LEVEL LETTER BOXES**

This Congress asks GMB to work with companies on amending building regulations to require letter boxes in new buildings to be positioned above a certain height.

We are aware that we cannot change the heights of letterboxes for existing older properties, so we need to change future builds.

We note that low level letterboxes cause problems for our courier/ delivery service members when carrying out their work. The height / position of the letterbox is of huge importance for postal/courier workers as back injury is the primary cause of sickness in the courier industry.

Openings positioned at the bottom of the doors can cause serious health & safety problems, due to back strain caused by repeatedly bending down to deliver parcels.

Low level letterboxes also present a security risk, as it is possible for thieves to reach in and steal letters and parcels that are sitting close to the opening.

Both Royal Mail and the Communications Workers Union (CWU) who represent postal workers have been campaigning to have minimum letterbox height guidelines enshrined in law and they have been lobbying MPs, government ministers, local authorities, and developers.

This rose to parliamentary prominence in January 2019 when a Private Members bill (Low-level Letter Boxes (Prohibition) Bill on minimum letterbox height sponsored by the CWU and Royal Mail was presented to the House of Commons. This received the support of all parties but hasn't gone any further.

We understand that the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, which advises the Secretary of State on Building Regulations, has formerly endorsed the call for change and sought to include this in the formal review of UK Building Regulations.

Congress, why do we see that in 2024, 5 years later nothing has been done.

Changing building regulations to this effect would bring us in line with Europe where a letterbox must be between 0.7m and 1.7m high.

Congress we are asking for GMB to push the Government to ensure that letterbox height is incorporated in building regulations for all new buildings.

**G50 EVRI BRANCH**  
**London Region**

*(Carried)*

TRACEY BEESON (London): This Congress asks GMB to work with companies on amending building regulations to require letter boxes in new buildings to be positioned above a certain height. We are aware that we cannot change the height of letter boxes that exist in older properties but we need to change the future build. We note that low level letter boxes cause problems for couriers, delivery service members when carrying out their work. The height of the letter box is of huge importance to postal and courier workers and is the primary cause of sickness in the courier industry. Opening positions at the bottom of the door can cause serious health and safety problems due to back strain caused by repeatedly bending down to deliver parcels. Low level letter boxes also present a security risk as it is possible for thieves to reach in and steal letters and parcels that are sitting close to the opening. Both Royal Mail and Communications Workers Union, CWU, who represent postal workers, have been campaigning to have minimum letter box height enshrined in law and they have been lobbying MPs, government ministers, local authorities, and developers. These gained parliamentary prominence in 2019 when the Private Members Bill, Low Level Letter Boxes, for the minimum letter box height sponsored by the CWU and Royal Mail was presented to the House of Commons. This received support of all the parties but has not gone any further. We understand that the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, which advises the Secretary of State on building regulations, has formally endorsed the call for change to be included in UK building regulations. Congress, why do we see that in 2024, five years later, nothing has been done. Changing building regulations, to be specific, would bring us in line with Europe where a letter box must be between 0.7m and 1.7m high. Congress, we are asking for the GMB to push the Government to ensure that letter box height is incorporated in building regulations for all new buildings. If you will just give me one minute, I just need to post my letter. Thank you. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Tracey, and thank you for the present here. I hold that up. Thank you. Secunder?

STEPHEN CLARE (London): First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* I have worked for Anglia Windows for 32 years so I am aware that in 2019 there was legislation and a British Standard BSEN13724 that all future letter boxes are between 0.7m and 1.7m height, minimum. As our motion points out, those regulations that require a letter box in new houses should be positioned at a certain height have never been changed. A person who is directly involved in

making the PVC doors myself I know that the regulations need to change and I will bring this up with my health and safety reps and my health and safety officer, and manager. I am sure many of you in this room have been out delivering election leaflets and you will be aware of the risk in health and safety. We also need to protect our members making deliveries such as a mover from Evri and work with our sister union CWU and the Royal Mail and postal workers. Clearly, there has been no thought given to these poor workers, postal and delivery workers have long rounds and heavy bags and would need to bend over to a lower level to deliver many items. As you can imagine, this causes strain injuries and back problems. Congress, we need to protect all our delivery workers to make it a legal height for letter boxes in building regulations. Congress, please support this motion and vote for Motion 186. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Stephen. Well done. Thank you. Mover of Motion 187, please.

## **FOOD BANKS MOTION 187**

### **187. FOOD BANKS**

This Congress notes with sadness that food banks have become a daily necessity under this Tory government.

We therefore call on the GMB:

1. To encourage all GMB Branches & Regions to adopt their local foodbank and organise workplace collections of food and other items to support them.
2. Support the Trussell Trust by affiliating or becoming a partner and making a donation.

### **B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

CATHY HANLON (London): In 2010, the number of people receiving emergency parcels from the Trussell Trust Food Banks was 61,468. In 2023, it was nearly three million, 2,986,203. This is one of the many blights that 14 years of Tory government has inflicted on our society. This increase is unsustainable and it is evident that the Trussell Trust needs support otherwise many people, including some of our members, will have to continue to go without food. This is why we are calling on the GMB to show practical and meaningful solidarity with the Trussell Trust and all the people who are forced to rely on its services. This can be done by affiliating to the Trussell Trust and donating by collecting food and other items at branch level.

We, of course, acknowledge the qualifications from the CEC that any affiliation and donation request should be assessed by the CEC Finance and General Purposes Committee. Union finances are precious and should be carefully handled. However, we are confident that the Trussell Trust will be deemed to be in line with the GMB policy and values, and cost requirements of basic solidarity will not be too prohibitive. Congress, we are now in a position where the state is failing to provide all its citizens with food and many have been reduced to depending on the kindness of others. We can and must help fill this void until the new government is able to fix this. Please vote for our motion and go back to your branches and encourage your sisters and brothers to support the Trussell Trust by donating and affiliating. Thank you. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. A seconder, please?

CORAL FINEMAN (London): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, the prevalence of food banks is a stark reflection of our society under the Tories, a fact that should trouble our conscience and stir us to action. This year I organised my first workplace food bank collection. I asked my local food bank for a list of most needed items, put it on the notice board and set up a collection point. It really was quite an easy thing to do. I had early doubts about whether it would be a success. The cost-of-living crisis has been hard on many of my colleagues as well. However, after rallying support from the GMB members and the rest of the workforce, we were quickly on our way to our target of 100 items. I was so happy when the branch then agreed to match this with my employer quick to follow. More than 300 essential items and all it took was a shopping list and a few conversations. I urge all branches and regions to adopt their local food bank and organise workplace collections. Further, I ask GMB to throw its full weight behind the Trussell Trust, which is the UK's largest food bank provider, like my own London region who donate £5,000 to the Trust every year. Congress, let us not forget the importance of solidarity and compassion in times of need. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Coral. Well done. The mover of Motion 188?

## **REFORMING THE ADOPTION PROCESS AND SYSTEM**

### **MOTION 188**

#### **188. REFORMING THE ADOPTION PROCESS AND SYSTEM**

This Congress recognises the potential benefits of adoption for both children in care and prospective adoptive parents and we propose a series of reforms to the adoption process and system. These reforms aim to streamline procedures, reduce the time adoptees spend in care, and eliminate barriers that may prevent suitable individuals from becoming adoptive parents.

Our primary objective is to petition the Government to create a more efficient, inclusive, and supportive adoption process that prioritises the well-being and stability of children awaiting adoption.

By implementing these reforms, we seek to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Streamline adoption procedures to minimise the time children spend in care, ensuring they are placed in permanent, loving homes as promptly as possible.
2. Identify and remove barriers that may be preventing qualified individuals and families from becoming adoptive parents, thus expanding the pool of potential caregivers.
3. Provide comprehensive support and resources to adoptive families to ensure they have the tools and knowledge necessary for successful parenting.
4. Foster stronger relationships with adoption agencies, social services, and relevant stakeholders to create a more cohesive and effective adoption system.
5. Establish clear guidelines, standards, and reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the adoption process.
6. Conduct a thorough review of current adoption procedures to identify and eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and delays.
7. Develop and implement educational programs and training sessions to equip prospective adoptive parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide a nurturing and stable environment.
8. Implement targeted outreach initiatives to engage potential adoptive parents, including those from under-represented communities, and provide tailored support throughout the process.
9. Advocate for legislative changes that facilitate a more efficient and inclusive adoption process, including reforms that remove barriers to adoption.
10. Establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and reporting on the progress and outcomes of the reformed adoption process, ensuring that objectives are met.

The reform of the adoption process and system is imperative in order to provide timely and loving homes for children in care, and to remove barriers preventing suitable individuals from becoming adoptive parents.

By endorsing this motion, we commit to creating a more efficient, inclusive, and supportive adoption system that prioritises the well-being and stability of children awaiting adoption.

### **H37 HILLINGDON BRANCH LONDON REGION London Region**

*(Referred)*

LUKE SIMCOCK (London): I recognise the impact adoption has for children's lives in care and for the perspective of adoptive parents. To me the issue is very deep and personal. My wife's sister has two wonderful daughters, my nieces, that were



adopted and my brother has a son who found his forever home for adoption. These stories have shown me the incredible potential and opportunities that adoption gives to children that are adopted. This motion aims for the Government to create a more effective, inclusive, and supportive adoption process that prioritises the wellbeing and stability for the children awaiting adoption. Throughout these reforms we aim to achieve several major outcomes. By minimising the time children spend in care, we ensure that they are placed in permanent loving homes, and currently it takes years and many children spend far too long just being in someone's workplace rather than in someone's family. We need to identify and remove the barriers to preventing qualified individuals and families from becoming adoptive parents. It includes simplifying the adoption process, providing better support for those going through the journey, and prospective parents facing lengthy assessment, sometimes based on their finances, and bureaucratic delays. It is easier to adopt a dolphin than to adopt a child. Providing comprehensive support and resources to adoptive families is essential, fostering stronger relationships with adoption agencies, social services, and relevant stakeholders, to create a more cohesive system, establishing clear guidance standards and reporting mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the entire process, conducting a more thorough review of the current adoption procedures because they are currently not working for the children, developing and implementing an educational programme and training session and support for adoptive parents as they go through and after the adoption process.

The adoption system is not working for the children that are in it and if it is not working for the children then what is the point. The children are the most important part of the system. The children who grow up in the system are more likely to have addiction problems, they are more likely to go to jail. These children need love, these children need a family, and these children need a change, and these children need a chance. Congress, thank you for listening. I move.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Luke. Well done. Seconder?

NICOLA WARR (London): As a foster carer looking after babies I have seen the adoption process close up. Foster babies are transitioned by the carers to their forever family home. The adopters cannot wait to embrace them but the system is failing them and failing the children in the system. From afar the system seems understandably rigorous with background checks, medicals, interviews, training, the list goes on, however, this process takes months and all too often years to complete. More recently I became an adopter. I have felt just how painful the system and process is. I have met other adopters who after three years are still

waiting for their approval and all the time the children remain in foster care. *(Applause)* My view of the system is not alone and everybody on the adoption training confirms how broken and bureaucratic the system and process is. Congress, with so many children needing loving, stable, caring homes it is a testament to the system being long overdue for reform. Congress, please support. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nicola. Thank you. There is no need to apologise. It is an emotional subject. Thank you. Does anybody wish to oppose? In that case can I ask Colin Gunter to respond from the CEC.

COLIN GUNTER (CEC): Responding on Motions 187 and 188 on behalf of the CEC. In one of the world's top richest countries the reliance still on food banks in the UK is alarming. The CEC, therefore, is supporting Motion 187 with a small qualification that in line with longstanding practice any affiliation and donation request should be assessed by the CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee based on the merits of the organisation in line with GMB policy and values and requirements regarding cost.

The CEC is asking for Motion 188 to be referred. We agree with the sentiments of the motion though it raises an area all familiar with existing GMB policy and calls for reforming the adoption process and system are outside our industrial expertise as a trade union. We wish to understand more about this issue, including any work being undertaken by London Region and we therefore ask for this motion to be referred to seek advice as appropriate.

The CEC is, therefore, asking Congress to support Motion 187 with the qualification outlined and for Motion 188 to be referred for the reasons set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Does London Region agree the qualification for Motion 187? I think I heard it in the speech but just to confirm. *(Agreed)* Yes. Thank you. And does London Region agree to refer Motion 188? *(Agreed)* Thank you. I do not need to take that as a vote. All those in favour of Motion 186 that the CEC is supporting please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 186 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 187 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 187 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 188 was REFERRED.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to the CEC Statement: Minimum Service Levels. A delegate again from each region will be invited to speak on the report and I will call them in reverse order of the regions that spoke on yesterday's CEC Statement and I will try and get them in the right order. Can I ask Kevin Buchanan to move the Statement, please.

## **CEC STATEMENT: MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS**

### **CEC STATEMENT: MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS**

**GMB Congress**

**Bournemouth 2024**

#### **CEC Statement Minimum Service Levels**

##### **Introduction**

Minimum Service Levels – 'MSLs' – are the latest attack on workers' fundamental rights.

In 2010, the Conservatives inherited some of the most restrictive trade union laws in Europe. Since then, they have imposed restriction upon restriction.

Through the Trade Union Act, they sought to frustrate our ability to ballot and organise. Through their attacks on facility time, they sought to frustrate our ability to represent our members. And under laws passed in the last two years, EU-era protections remain under threat, authoritarian provisions in the Public Order Act infringe on our right to demonstrate, and the way was paved the way for agency workers to be used as strikebreakers. This is a co-ordinated campaign with the aim of breaking the rights and power of organised labour.

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, and its Regulations, represent the latest front in that campaign. It is perhaps its most bitter expression. The MSLs are a betrayal of the workers who saw the country through the pandemic, at great personal cost. The Tories have gone from clapping key workers to sacking them – just for exercising their essential right to withdraw their labour.

The NHS's own figures show that ambulance delays actually fell during strike days, because the voluntary 'life and limb' cover negotiated by unions was comprehensive. GMB has also voluntarily put life and limb cover in place in other disputes, which are not covered by the Regulations, such as British Gas. Our members now report that such voluntary arrangements are less likely to be put in place. The Government's own impact assessment said that MSLs would lead to absenteeism and longer disputes. This is not about protecting the public – this is an ideological attack on workers' rights.

Even some employers have said that they don't want MSLs. Rishi Sunak has no democratic mandate for them: the Act and its regulations go far beyond a 2019 Conservative Party manifesto commitment to impose 'a minimum service ... during transport strikes.' The Act has been imposed across Great Britain, despite a House of Lords vote to exclude Scotland, and despite widespread opposition in the devolved nations.

The law provides no mechanism for arbitration or appeal in violation of the global norms as set out by the International Labour Organisation. And crucially, the MSLs will not make a single patient safer, nor will they advantage any pupil. Industrial action is an essential safety valve. Without the right to industrial recourse, public services will be denied the fight for the investment that people who rely on them desperately need.

GMB and other unions are fighting back. We fought against the legislation in Parliament. We are putting pressure on employers to pledge that they will never impose a Work Notice. Crucially, the union movement agreed a united industrial response in December 2023 – which this Statement asks GMB Congress to endorse. And, in line with the political objects of our union, we have a commitment that a Labour Government will repeal them.

We will fight this battle just as we have fought every other, with pride, with dignity and with solidarity, until we win, and the MSLs are consigned to the dustbin of history where they belong. This Statement sets out GMB's way ahead.

### **The threat to workers' rights**

Our union's legal liability is increased by the MSL legislation. But the most important risk is to our members in the sectors affected, who are potentially less protected by the law than at any point since the infamous Taff Vale judgement.

Across the country, one in five workers – 5.5 million people – are at risk of losing their right to strike. GMB's members are already directly covered in ambulance services, schools, and parts of the transport sector, while the threat of Regulations in nuclear decommissioning stands at the time of writing. The Tories are threatening to 'strengthen' the law further, which could see MSLs extended to yet more sectors.

Under the Act (and its associated regulations and Code of Practice):

- Ministers have sweeping powers to impose arbitrary restrictions on the right to strike in affected sectors by issuing regulations.
- Employers can issue a 'Work Notice' at least 7 days before a strike. The Work Notice will set out the details of the workers that the employer believes are necessary to provide a minimum level of service. The Work Notice can be varied by the employer up to 4 days before a strike.
- If workers who are listed in the Work Notice take industrial action then they will lose their legal protection against dismissal for engaging in industrial action.
- If a union is found by a court to have not taken 'reasonable steps' to comply with the Work Notice then the court can issue an award against the union. The maximum amount was raised in 2022 from £250,000 to £1 million.
- The Government's new Code of Practice goes beyond the Act and states that unions may not act 'reasonably' unless they act to prevent picketers from encouraging workers named in the Work Notice from crossing a picket line.

The fact is that the MSLs are not just wrong and unnecessary – they are unworkable. In schools, each headteacher or Trust leader will be responsible for drawing up work notices: an impossible task in most cases. The MSLs are strongly opposed by 97 per cent of our members in schools. In ambulance services, the Government estimated that 80 per cent cover would be needed compared to a typical shift. GMB's research shows that:

- Ambulances are so worn out that only 78 per cent of vehicles are operable on a typical day.
- One in ten call handler posts are vacant – rising as high as four in ten in the worst affected areas.

The public is not being denied minimum service levels by trade unions. They are being denied effective services by almost fifteen years of cuts, privatisation, and Ministerial mismanagement. Without the redress of strike action, services will become more unsafe as a result of these draconian dictats.

The impact of the MSLs will not fall equally. History has shown that black, Asian and other ethnic minority workers have been at the forefront of strike action: from Grunwick and the Bristol colour bar strikes to NHS outsourced contracts and Amazon today. These unacceptable restrictions will be most keenly felt by these workers, and women and disabled workers, who are more likely to work in the affected sectors. GMB is committed to highlighting, researching, and politically campaigning on the disproportionate impact of the MSLs on these groups.

### **MSLs – fighting back**

GMB has been at the forefront of the campaign against MSLs.

Through our political department, we worked to oppose, delay, and attempted to defeat the Bill when it was going through Parliament. We also helped to secure a commitment from the Labour Party that the Act will be repealed alongside all other post-2010 anti-trade union legislation in the first 100 days of a new Parliament.

Since the legislation was passed, we have pressured employers not to issue work notices. We recognise and welcome the fact that the Welsh and Scottish governments have both said that they will not impose work notices. In the rail sector, even the train operators directly controlled by the Government have declined to issue work notices – which showed how weak the support for the legislation really is.

Crucially, the TUC convened a Special Congress for the first time in more than forty years to agree a united response from the trade union movement. The STUC Congress has also carried strong statements against MSL. The TUC Special Congress agreed that all affiliates would work together to assert an industrial response based on solidarity when any trade union member is specified in a work notice; challenge to employers that co-operate with the legislation; challenge to the legislation itself in the courts; and upholding the TUC's call to build a campaign of non-compliance.

GMB spoke in favour of the position, and we organised in support of the national demonstration in Cheltenham on 27 January. The actions agreed by the Congress are included as an appendix to this document. By bringing this Statement, the CEC is asking GMB Congress to endorse the position that our delegation took.

If a Work Notice is issued, the first discussions must be with the members affected, and held through our lay democratic structures. But these principles are fundamental: we will always seek to work in solidarity with other unions, and we will never leave our members behind.

These laws were made in Parliament. Ultimately, they must be defeated there too. The Labour Party has pledged to repeal the Strikes Act and its regulations within 100 days of a new Parliament. The MSLs are a desperate gambit from a Tory government that is out of touch, out of ideas, and out of time. As the General Election approaches, we will work tirelessly to secure a change in government, and to hold Labour to its pledge. We reiterate and uphold our call for the repeal of all anti-trade union clauses in wider employment law.

### **Appendix – actions resolved by the 2023 TUC Special Congress**

#### **Congress resolves that we will:**

##### **Support**

1. Equip every trade union member with the tools to resist this legislation in the workplace. Unions will continue to work together to adopt different tactical approaches to non-cooperation and non-compliance. We will support affiliates in deploying novel and effective forms of industrial action to maximise resistance to work notices. We will develop practical solidarity plans for unions actively engaged in strategies of non-compliance.
2. Support any worker subject to a work notice, including with support from across the trade union movement, if their employer disciplines them in any way.
3. Ensure that where employers fail to resolve disputes, workforces are still able to exercise their democratic right to withdraw their labour.

4. Ensure that where any affiliate is facing significant risk of sanctions because of this legislation, we convene an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee to consider options for providing practical, industrial, financial and/or political backing to that union.

### **Resist**

5. Continue our wider legal challenge to these undemocratic laws – leaving no stone unturned internationally and in UK courts.
6. Call on all employers and public bodies with oversight to oppose this counterproductive legislation. Employers and public bodies from across the public sector and the country have already signalled their opposition to the Strikes Act. All employers and public bodies must reject it.
7. Ensure that any employer tempted to deploy and impose work notices understands that the union movement will unite to resist them - in the workplace and in the courts.
8. Campaign to name and shame as anti-union and anti-worker all employers and public bodies who deploy work notices.
9. Seek to challenge minimum service levels on the grounds of public safety, worker safety, data protection, employees' existing contractual agreements and equalities.
10. Seek to ensure that the data protection and privacy rights of trades union members are fully respected and protected at all times, as we resist the imposition of these undemocratic restrictions.
11. Refuse to tell our members to cross a picket line.

### **Mobilise**

12. Mobilise the whole trade union movement to march with the sacked GCHQ workers through Cheltenham on 27 January, to commemorate their struggle, and to recommit ourselves to defiant opposition to Conservative minimum service levels, trade union restrictions and any threat to the right to strike.
13. Call an urgent demonstration in the event a work notice is deployed and a union or worker is sanctioned in relation to a work notice.
14. Coordinate communications and campaigning activity across the trade union movement.

### **Repeal**

15. Hold Labour to their commitment to repeal this legislation within their first 100 days of office as a key part of promoting and fully implementing the wider New Deal for working people as a flagship policy in the forthcoming general election.

For more than 150 years, unions have fought for safer workplaces with decent pay and conditions. And we have won. We will respond to this shameful Conservative attack on our rights by redoubling our efforts to build a stronger more diverse movement that keeps winning for workers. We will stand together. Our message is clear, we will not rest until this legislation is repealed.

KEVIN BUCHANAN (CEC): Thank you, President. Congress, I hope and pray we are witnessing the dying days of the most shambolic anti-union government to disgrace public office. Fourteen years of bashing unions in the media and running key services into the ground, fourteen years of imposing restriction after restriction, and going further than even Margaret Thatcher. Our members do not take strike action because they want to disrupt public services. They take strike action because workers and those services are on their knees. Workers are not a threat to society's safety net. They are the safety net. We will always defend our members when they come under attack.

Minimum service levels are a violation of our fundamental rights. They are an attempt to distract attention from the Tories catastrophic mismanagement of

public services and critical infrastructure. They have gone from clapping our members to sacking them just for exercising their rights, not even the employers asked for this. The GMB has worked with other unions to ensure that not a single work notice has been issued but make no mistake if the Tories are returned to office this agenda will be back with a vengeance. We are fighting the MSLS in the workplace but ultimately it must be unmade in Parliament. The Labour Party has said that it will repeal the Strikes Act and we must hold them to this commitment and ensure that the pledge is enacted within the first 100 days of a new Labour government. *(Applause)*

Congress, last year the union Movement agreed a common agenda at the TUC Special Congress held in December, an agenda based on neutral support and working together to defeat any attempt to impose work notices on our members. We are asking you today to endorse that decision. Congress, minimum service levels are an affront to the idea of a free society. We must put this issue on the ballot box next month. We must defeat the MSLS, defend our services and national infrastructure, and defend our members. Congress, not one member left behind – not one member left behind. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Can I ask Gwylan Brinkworth to second, please?

GWYLAN BRINKWORTH (CEC): Congress, let's nail this lie once and for all. When our members took strike action in the NHS last year they bent over backwards to protect the public. In fact, the locally negotiated cover was so comprehensive that delays actually fell on strike days. Our members left the picket lines to ensure that the most serious calls were answered. They had been pushed to the limit because the NHS is being pushed to its limits and patients are dying every day as a result. The minimum service level of 80%, come off it! The NHS does not hit that target on a good day. We cannot even get 80% of the ambulances on the road and in some parts of the country a third of call-handler vacancies are unfilled. These are low paid workers who are amongst the worst hit by MSLS. In schools, the Government is leaving it to individual head teachers to draw up work notices. Can you imagine the chaos this will cause and the power it puts in the hands of senior management. These pernicious regulations target low paid workers and women in particular. Our members in the transport sector are also affected and the threat of regulation hangs over the heads of our members in nuclear decommissioning. Congress, there is hope. The union Movement has been given a strong and united response from management unions alongside the shop floor, we will resist the MSLS in the workplace. We will secure the commission from the Labour Party that MSLS will be repealed. Now we need them to deliver. Congress, please support the CEC position. Please support the Statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gwylan. Can I call the first speaker from Wales & South West, please?

JONATHAN STRACHAN-TAYLOR (Wales & South West) speaking in favour of the CEC Special Report: Congress, minimum service levels are a nasty little move made by a nasty government. Although they try to argue that important services have to run in difficult circumstances surrounding industrial action, the truth is there is a move to distract the rights of working people to take industrial action. Take it from somebody who works in the NHS. If this was about service they would have them implemented around the clock but, sadly, many of our services run properly on days minimum service levels are enforced. Congress, we need to fight back on this. In Wales we are lucky the Welsh Government, led by Vaughan Gething, has stated publicly that they will not implement minimum service levels. This is the right course of action that defends our members' democratic rights. But we must do more across the rest of the UK and whilst we know that the next Labour Government has committed to rescind them, it is important that we fight against them from today, not a few weeks' time or a month's time, we must support the members when they receive notices so that they are not overwhelmed or anxious, we need to support, and talking things out we can ease the pressure on the members and the reps. We should do this with the support and backing of the Executive Committee and their added weight. We must challenge undemocratic rules both in person and in the courts. These challenges go into the framework of British democracy and they must be rolled back at the earliest opportunity. We must name and shame the companies that use these practices on our members and the public are informed of the kind of organisation they are. We must mobilise and organise the whole trade union Movement to defend this wholesale attack on trade union rights.

Congress, this report gives our activists the tools and means to defend themselves against bad employers and a Tory government that will continue its wars on working class people. Agree this and let's give our members the ammo to protect themselves, Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jonathan. Southern, a speaker from Southern Region? Formally. Thank you. Scotland?

JILLIAN MCFARLANE (GMB Scotland) speaking in support of the CEC Statement. First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, the Tories' Minimum Service Levels laws are another obvious attack on trade unions' and workers' rights. Not only is it unwanted by workers, it is also unwanted by many employers who view it as unworkable and unhelpful in industrial relations, but this has not



stopped the Tories. Unworkable and unhelpful are also perfect ways to describe this Tory government. Public services across the UK have been bombarded with cuts for 14 years now. Services are on their knees and the workforce are put under more and more pressure. In many cases the workforce are not just out the door, they are out the country looking for opportunities elsewhere. What the Tories fail to understand is that trade unions are not just fighting for better pay, terms and conditions for our members. They are fighting for better public services for four nations. We cannot have a world-class health service, for example, without the pay to match. In Scotland the Scottish government has refused to implement minimum levels in large part due to the recognition of the value of trade unions in our public services and respect for workers' rights. This is an important example of how devolved parliaments and assemblies move in the right direction to protect the needs of people and the home nation and act as a buffer against the worst of Tory UK government. The Labour Party is committed to repeal all the Tory anti-trade union legislation within the first 100 days of a Labour government but they must match this commitment with action. This is not a commitment that can be watered down. It is a commitment which must be immediately acted upon and on which the labour Movement will judge Keir Starmer. It is our job to hold their feet to the fire and make sure the Labour Party is true to its word. Congress, support this Statement. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jillian. North West & Irish Region? North West & Irish Region? Formally. Thank you. North East, Yorkshire, & Humber.

HOLLY JOHNSTON (North East, Yorkshire, & Humber) speaking in support of the CEC Statement on Minimum Service Levels. First time speaker. (*Applause*) We asked for the CEC Statement on Minimum Service Levels. Thank you. Last year the TUC passed a motion at Congress that set out a fighting strategy to oppose the new anti-strike law. It is important that GMB call on the TUC and the union Movement to carry out the motion that was passed as well actioning what has been outlined in the Statement, including coalitions of non-compliance, coordinating demands on employers, devolved governments and public bodies. We already some of the strictest anti-trade union laws in Europe and let's be clear, services are not able to deliver safe staffing levels on any day of the week. All of my shifts last week in the hospital were severely understaffed and unsafe. It is not strike days that cause patient harm, it is the Government's cuts and refusal to prioritise our public services. (*Applause*) the Government made this law under the guise of safety but if they really cared about safety they would be prioritising a fully staffed workforce across our public services and crucially in the NHS. How are we meant to sound the alarm on conditions, on pay, and safety, when our rights are attacked again and again. Striking is our democratic right. We see the deterioration in our public services and it is patent it is workers that will pay the

price for the Government's neglect. We need to be prepared. We may even need to continue with the fight for the NHS and other public services under a Labour government. We need to up the pressure so the Minimum Service Levels Act be repealed completely, but it is also time to go further than that. We need to repeal all the anti-trade union laws that go way back to the 80s and put this demand on an incoming Labour government. (*Applause*) Please support the Statement. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Holly. Thank you. Midlands?

SIMON DAY (Midlands): Good morning, President. Good morning, Congress. Paramedic, Branch Secretary West Midlands Ambulance Branch, here to endorse the Statement for the Midlands Region, and endorse everything that everybody has said so far, but not to say ditto. It is just to say that whenever we talk about strikes and Covid, and clapping for NHS workers, I am always reminded of Zoe. Zoe was an ambulance worker in our branch. She had worked for the ambulance service for many years. She had been clapped, called a hero, and then at 42 she contracted Covid. Two years or so go by for the end of Covid and her health, her income, and her career in the ambulance service were in tatters because Covid took her last breath. She was not dead but, essentially, to all intents and purposes she never worked again. She would never see the flourishing career established that she thought she was going to have and at times she thought she might as well have been dead. Her employer, our employer, wanted to terminate her contract on the grounds that she could not fulfil her duties. It was only the trade union standing next to her, supporting her, speaking for her, and standing up for her that made a difference. (*Applause*) It turned that situation into something a little bit more bearable. I always remember that story because we are in a constant struggle and endorsing this Statement on MSLS reminds me that we need to be endorsed that our struggles today are for our colleagues of tomorrow and we need to commit not just in a nod and a yes, but in action and in words to fight every anti-trade union law that we face in our country today, for our colleagues tomorrow. On behalf of Midlands Region, and I hope on behalf of all of us, let's endorse this Statement and fight these horrendous laws wherever we see them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. London Region?

ELIZABETH HUGHES (London): Good morning, President, Congress, speaking to endorse the CEC Statement. GMB London Region supports the Statement. The Tories' introduction of minimum service levels is an insult to our members. Our members worked throughout the pandemic at great personal risk and they now face being sacked for exercising their hard won right to withdraw their labour.

Congress, this is a slap in the face to all working people. Minimum service levels are not just insulting but they are also totally ineffective. They will not make the public safer. They will not benefit school pupils. They will not end disputes any quicker. Congress, that is not just what our members think, these are the views shared by the Government's own impact assessment. But we all know what is really going on here. Minimum service levels were not introduced to protect the public. They serve a single purpose. They have been introduced as a Tory ideological attack on workers' basic rights. So let's be clear, the public is not being denied minimum service levels by our members' industrial action. They are being denied the services they deserve by the political decisions of 14 years of a Tory government. So, our London Region is committed to doing everything in our power to ensure that the Labour Party delivers on their promise to repeal minimum service levels in the first 100 days of a Labour government as part of a new deal for working people. *(Applause)* Congress, be mindful, this is what is on the ballot paper in three weeks' time, so vote Labour, elect GMB Labour MPs, and repeal the Tory minimum service levels legislation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elizabeth. Before I put that Statement to the vote, can I just ask the movers and seconders of Motions 94, 96, 97, and 98 to come down to the front as well, please. I will put that Statement on the minimum service levels to the vote. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried unanimously, thank you.

*The CEC Statement: Minimum Service Levels was CARRIED.*

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Employment Policy: Rights at Work so can I ask the mover of Motion 94 to come to the rostrum. Thank you.

### **DAY ONE PROTECTION FOR YOUNG WORKERS**

#### **MOTION 94**

##### **94. DAY ONE PROTECTION FOR YOUNG WORKERS**

Congress notes that the New Deal for working people will give rights on day one in a job. This will benefit so many, otherwise, marginalised workers, in particular young workers. The banning of zero hours contracts and removal of age bands from the minimum wage will provide young workers with the security and certainty they need when entering the workplace.

In many workplaces the right to protection from unfair dismissal and to statutory redundancy pay only kicks in after being continuously employed for two years. This places young workers at a disadvantage to rights and protections afforded to them in the workplace.

In a report by the TUC in November 2023, during TUC'S Young workers Month 2023, it showed that employees aged between 16-24 are less likely to have built up two years continuous service in the same job, so are much more likely to miss out on key protections.

Young people are also much more likely to be on zero-hours contracts – which means they are ‘workers’ (without employee status) who miss out on essential rights – like the right to request flexible working or the right to return to the same job after maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave.

Young women workers are hit harder with young Black Asian Minority Ethnic Workers are 12 times more likely to be on zero hours contract than white workers.

Congress notes that The New Deal for Working People, by the Labour Party, is to be commended, particularly in providing workplace protections and rights for young worker from day one in their job.

Congress is called upon to:

1. To continue to highlight the differences in protections afforded to young workers than other workers.
2. To continue to campaign to ban zero-hour contracts through highlighting and raising awareness of their unjust impact on young workers.

To continue working with young workers on campaigns such as for fair pay, banning unpaid internship, strengthening flexible working rights from day one and other issues which place young workers at a disadvantage in the workplace.

## **E10 EALING BRANCH**

### **London Region**

*(Carried)*

MURAD ALI (London): First of all I will start by giving you some facts. We are the sixth largest economy in the world and the second largest economy of Europe. Now the disappointing facts are how we are treating our younger workers, younger population. A research was done by the Equality Trust in 2023 and the name of the research was Your Time Your Pay. The main purpose of the research was to assess the awareness, education, and appreciation of the employment rights in the young age group of workers. The time taken to conduct this research was 1,000 16–24 year olds. According to this research young people were exploited at work. Now, how were they exploited? They were exploited all through legal means. There was no illegal route adopted. They were exploited via unpaid "trialships", working without a contract, zero hour contracts, legally allowed lower minimum wages, not being auto enrolled for pensions, and lack of education about employment rights. The research also found out that 73% of young people were not members of a trade union. These were the challenges the young people say they had and what they call challenges as well where many suffered during post-pandemic, and young workers were most likely to suffer job losses. They also suffered lack of education because of the school closures. They suffered wage discrimination because employers were legally allowed to pay them lower wages. There was a scarcity of housing needs, increasing rent means they could not afford the rent let alone getting on to the property ladder, and those who

chose to go to the universities left the universities saddled with huge debts of thousands of pounds.

Now, the two main lessons of this research was, first of all, educational institutions should focus more on imparting employment rights related to education for young workers. Secondly, it is a lesson for us as well, the trade unions, we need to do more to recruit younger workers. According to the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, what he said was have confidence in the young people, give them a chance, and they will surprise us. Please vote for this Motion 94. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Murad. A seconder?

JAMIE WALKER (London): Hello, I am seconding this motion. President, Congress, this is my first time as a delegate and first time as a speaker. (*Applause*) Okay, a nearly 50-year old seconding the motion for day one protection on young workers is not quite as strange as you think. My brothers in the sectors that are affected by this are some of the most dedicated people I know. The day one protections for young workers announced in Labour's New Deal for Working People are a good start but we are asking for this motion to be supported to ensure that it is not just "won and done", it is always easiest for unscrupulous employers to chip away at those just starting out in their working life and to burden them with unequal terms while paradoxically relying on them to do the oddest times and shifts and be ever ready to go back to work. They rely on them going one step further, mindful that there is always more waiting in the wings if they disagree while denying hard-fought rights and equalities that older workers enjoy.

Congress, it is important for us to keep an eye on the protections for young workers as the GMB and to make sure that the promises made are realised and defended as the years go by. We have seen how previous governments have weakened and splintered commitments on zero hour contracts for a worker that needs to be employed for two years in sectors that traditionally rely on short-term employment. It is a ridiculous notion and it is even sillier when it comes to having people and employers specifically looking for people to be employed on a lower rate because it is legal to pay workers a lower amount when they are at a younger age. It is not good for any of us at this stage of our working lives to have one set of working colleagues treated differently. We should not do this for gender. We should not do this for ethnicity. We should not do this for disability. We should not do this for sexual orientation. We should not treat workers differently for their age. Please support this motion to help protect our young workers. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jamie. Spot-on. Can I have the mover of Motion 96, please?

## **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIFIC GIG-ECONOMY MEMBER BENEFITS**

### **MOTION 96**

#### **96. INTRODUCTION OF SPECIFIC GIG-ECONOMY MEMBER BENEFITS**

This congress moves to utilize the unions size and collective power to reduce the impact of falsely self-employed burdens on precarious workers.

Those disenfranchised from traditional forms of work are vulnerable to market risks and costs normally bore by the employer, they suffer hourly penalties for insurance, demand variance, theft risks, and vehicles operations & maintenance costs.

Congress should be aware that some couriers pay £1.5 per hour for hire and reward insurance, paying further surges on basic car insurance. A courier moped or pedal cycle is mandated by gig-companies to abandon their vehicles without secure storage for a minimum of 7 minutes per job exposing them further to the ever-present risk of theft and subsequent inability to provide for themselves and family.

There is no market available insurance for pedal cycle theft that is suitable for couriers conditions.

Congress resolves to utilize its collective nature to secure favourable rates for its members and empower them to reduce the looming threats and penalties of false self-employment.

#### **Y10 YORK GENERAL**

##### **North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Carried)*

CRISTIAN SANTABARBARA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Hello, Congress. I am a first time speaker, a first time delegate. *(Applause)* I am glad to see the CEC supported this motion. To me it just makes sense. We are the third biggest union in the country and already use our size to secure better rates for members in all elements of life, medical, dental, and accident insurance. We are already good at this. It is not a new skill that needs to be developed. We do it already. So, as some of you may be aware, gig-economy workers have all their rights stripped and all the enterprise risks and costs of work have been laid at our feet by what would be employers. These risks and cost deteriorate our living and our earnings and all of this contributes to a loss of up to 30% per hour depending on how busy the lot is of each gig-economy worker. Therefore, it is logical for us to use our established networks, our bargaining power and our size, to negotiate better rates for members for their ongoing expenses. Now, not only does this make sense for current members, but it strengthens underlying offerings for prospective members. For example, a theoretical discount of 10p per hour over our average 58-hour working week is £5.80 a week. That over four weeks pays for the membership and it actually makes being in the GMB a financial net positive to members. This is money that is better in our union pocket as opposed to additional capital in corporate coffers. The security is that in any ideal world

should be provided in stable employment. So, we have to remember as we go into representation in the on demand sector and secure platforms like Deliveroo we need dynamically to adapt our models to succeed in an area that is characterised by exploited practices and increasing with vicarious work. This simple motion will cost the union very little but it has so, so many opportunities making working life better for members, improves our paths of offering, and it will grow our membership. It just makes sense.

On a final note, we have an event today at 5.30 after Congress. You can come along. You can listen to me. You can hear our story. You can hear what we are doing in the gig-economy and all the really great work that we are doing. Please do come along, ask some questions, and just chat. I move. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

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

WAYNE KIRBY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) After 29 years on the production line working in Kit-Kat it is a privilege to be standing here talking to you as the GMB Nestle York convenor, speaking to support Cristian by seconding Motion 96. Congress, gig workers really deserve our full support and solidarity. The instability of their work, their lack of proper employment rights, holidays and pensions, are a massive concern. Throughout collective bargaining there must be opportunities to improve the workplace conditions whether it is through insurance or maintenance support but most importantly we must stand together as fellow workers to get gig workers the permanent employment rights they need and deserve. One in six adults works a gig job at least once a week. This is potentially millions of people that we should be reaching out to and organising. We know that organising gig workers can be hard and slow work but by finding brilliant leaders like Cristian I know that we can rise to the challenge. For anyone that wants to know more about organising these workers, please come along to Cristian's fringe with Deliveroo. Congress, please support this motion and let's stand together, shoulder to shoulder, with our gig workers and help them to organise to win. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Wayne. I am so impressed with our first time delegates, first time speakers. Well done. Now the mover of Motion 97, please?

## **BRADFORD SCORING**

### **MOTION 97**

#### **97. BRADFORD SCORING**

The Bradford factor is a specific type of absenteeism. It is adopted by many employers and affects many of our members. It is a mathematical application and does not take into account why an employee was absent from work.

The Bradford Factor is overly complicated and very often not understood by the managers that are applying it. Furthermore, it's applied objectively and quite often leads to direct discrimination as it does not account for an employee's mitigating circumstances such as menopause, disability and mental health. It penalises employees who have a genuine illness and is open to abuse by those applying it.

We are calling on all regions to campaign for the removal of this scoring system in workplaces where it affects our members.

#### **D30 DURHAM AND TEESSIDE GENERAL North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Carried)*

SUE SOWERBY SCOTT (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Speaking on the Bradford Scoring factor. Back in the 1980s, and I was not alive then, the University of Bradford management introduced a system to deter workplace disruption due to absenteeism. It is now adopted by many employers and affects many, many of our members. It is a mathematical application and does not take into account why an employee is absent from work. It is not a crime to be ill. The Bradford factor is overly complicated and it is very often misunderstood by management applying it. Furthermore, it is applied objectively and more often leads to direct discrimination and does not take into account the employee's mitigating circumstances, such as the menopause, disability, and mental health. It is also open to abuse by those applying it and penalises those with a genuine illness. Bradford Scoring implies that employees are workshy and ready to jump at any opportunity given to get out of working. HR, human is the key element in human resources management and conversations are key to supporting employees and to resolve the underlying issues around absence. They should never treat all staff as if they are the same. We are calling on all regions to campaign for the removal of the workplace scoring system where it is having a massively detrimental effect on our members. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue. A seconder? A seconder for Motion 97?

MICHAEL BIRCH (North East, Yorkshire, & Humber): Good morning, Madam President, Congress. First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* I am seconding Motion 97, the Bradford formula. I am proud to work for Tetley Tea to keep the nation going one cuppa at a time! I want to talk directly about the Bradford factor and employee measure for choice when managing non-



attendance directly impacts on workers like me. I am a forklift driver and I have worked at Tetley for 23 years and I also suffer with IBS. Despite my long service and despite my commitment to the company, under this measure I could too easily be identified as a problematic worker just because in any given period I have had a couple of flare-ups. Employers may try to claim that this formula is neutral but in reality it is directly discriminating against individuals with disabilities or conditions. It is overcomplicated and may be deliberately misunderstood. The outcome for staff on the ground is targeting of individuals who are unable to meet their employer's targets due to factors beyond their control. This is discrimination that we must challenge. Fairness in the workplace cannot be achieved through a one-size-fits-all approach. I believe that if employers really want the best from their workers they should be offered support, those with disabilities and chronic conditions, to assist them in delivering at work and not writing them off because of this one formula.

Congress, as a movement we must challenge all injustices when it is committed blatantly and the Bradford factor is clearly discriminating and we should all put our collective efforts behind campaigning to remove it from every workplace across this country. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mike. Perfect timing as well. The mover of Motion 98, please? The mover of Motion 98? North East, Yorkshire, & Humber? No? It will fall if nobody comes forward. Motion 98? No? That motion falls.

*Motion 98 FELL.*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to those motions? No? In that case can I ask the CEC to respond with Samanta Zubrute.

SAMANTA ZUBRUTE (CEC) responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 96 and 97, said: The CEC is supporting Motion 96 with a small qualification that we cannot guarantee that GMB will be able to secure the lowest rates of insurance for our courier members but we can certainly investigate.

The CEC is also supporting Motion 97 with a qualification. The Bradford factor scoring system is a crude tool often used for management to discriminate against workers. The GMB has previously successfully argued for the suspension of the Bradford scoring during the Covid lockdown and for workers experiencing the menopause. A concerted campaign demanding the replacement of Bradford with holistic occupational health measures is timely. Our qualification is simply that rather than all regions campaigning for removal, the CEC would be taking it forward across the whole GMB.

Motion 98 has fallen so the CEC is therefore asking for Motions 96 and 97 to be supported with the qualification outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Samanta. The CEC is supporting Motion 94 so all those in favour of 94 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 94 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Does North East, Yorkshire, & Humber, accept the qualification on Motion 96? (*Agreed*) And on 97? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will put those two to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 96 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 96 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 97 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Motion 97 was CARRIED.*

## **POLITICAL: THE LABOUR PARTY**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Political: The Labour Party, and taking motions related to the Labour Party, so can I have the mover of Composite 10, please, be ready to come to the rostrum, so that is Composite 10 and Motion 182 in this section. Then it is Motion 156, 157, and Emergency Motion 1 should be ready to speak as well, please.

## **FULL COMMITMENT TO A NEW DEAL FOR WORKING PEOPLE & OPPOSING THE ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS**

### **COMPOSITE MOTION 10**

*(Covering Motions 180 and 181)*

180 – New Deal for Working People & Opposing the Anti-Trade Union Laws – London Region

181 – Full Commitment to a New Deal for Working People – London Region

## **FULL COMMITMENT TO A NEW DEAL FOR WORKING PEOPLE & OPPOSING THE ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS**

Congress notes that the Labour Party has committed to a New Deal for Working People aimed at strengthening workers' rights and making Britain work for working for people. Congress also notes that the New Deal is in line with GMB policy on reversing anti-Trade union laws, strengthening workers' rights, and creating better jobs.

Congress is concerned, however, that the New Deal, which British workers desperately need, is being watered down. In September 2021, Labour's Green Paper on the New Deal said that 'Labour is committed to repealing anti-trade union legislation', but by July 2023, this had been watered down to repealing the Trade Union Act 2016, the Minimum Service Levels (Strikes) Bill and the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

In September 2021, the New Deal proposed a series of Fair Pay Agreements negotiated through sectoral collective bargaining, reversing the decades-long decline in collective bargaining coverage', but by July 2023, Labour committed only to establishing a new Fair Pay Agreement in the adult social care sector.

In September 2021, the New Deal proposed to 'end the presumption in favour of outsourcing', but by July 2023, this had been replaced by a commitment to 'end the ideological drive to privatise our public services' and to 'reinstate and strengthen the last Labour government's Two-Tier Code'.

This Congress agrees that the Labour Party must restate its full commitment to a New Deal for working people.

We welcomed the Leader of the Labour Party to Congress 2023 in Brighton and heard from him how he intends to implement stronger, fairer conditions for workers within the first 100 days of winning the General Election by legislating for a New Deal.

This Congress agrees that we should work with all elected Labour Party politicians, PPC's, Mayors, Assembly Members, Councillors, and they must help us fight to strengthen the protections afforded to all workers by banning zero-hours contracts, outlawing bogus self-employment, ending qualifying periods for basic rights such as unfair dismissal, sick pay, and parental leave.

This country is crying out for a Labour Government but their tenure in Government will be short lived if they shortchange working people and row back on their pledges to make life fairer for millions of working people.

This Congress agrees to work across the TU and Political movement to engage all GMB and TU Politicians, whatever office, or status they hold, to drive a much deeper and wider understanding and integration of the long fought for "New Deal for working people" between now and the General Election.

Politicians should be proud to stand up for working people, the electorate, and any attempt to row back on delivering fairness will be seen as shallow and duplicitous.

Congress calls on the GMB to campaign, alongside other unions wherever possible, for the Labour Party to cease watering down the New Deal and stand by its commitments, implementing it in full and legislating as promised within the first 100 days where necessary.

Moving region: London

Seconding region: London

*(Carried)*

MATTHEW WRIGHT London Region Essex General Branch and parliamentary candidate for Braintree against James Cleverly. *(Applause)* In the last seven years the Government has passed three pieces of anti-union legislation and in the last 14 years we have seen an unmitigated erosion of living standards, increased precarity, and an ever growing wealth gap between those at the top and the rest of us. We are enjoying the longest wage freeze since the Napoleonic War and as ever it is working people who are forced to bear the consequences of Tory misrule. Across the country workers are robbed of their dignity and for too

many work no longer pays, but there is hope, Labour's New Deal for Working People, a package that was agreed at the National Policy Forum last summer and which our union played a crucial role in securing will be transformative for workers. The New Deal promises among other things to end pernicious zero hour contracts, prevent the westernisation of fire-and-rehire, and give employees full rights from day one. It will also free trade unions from the strictures of anti-union legislation and empower us with new rights of access and protection for shop stewards. It will give workers the security they deserve and we must ensure this package becomes law.

There are some who are more sceptical of the benefits of what when passed will be one of the most consequential acts any Labour government has ever done and while Keir has recently recommitted to the proposals in the New Deal it is vital that we work with our allies across the Movement within and without the Labour Party to ensure the Labour government starts the process to turn these commitments into watertight law in the first 100 days of parliament. Once this is done we will continue to fight for our hard-earned rights and redouble efforts to encourage Labour to implement the commitments that were lost, including meaningful increases in statutory sick pay, the repealing of anti-union legislation, and its democratic and fair closed shops, and the expansion of collective bargaining across the economy.

Congress, we have an opportunity not just to dream of change but to ensure change. If you do not trust Labour, trust in our Movement and be sure we honour our pledges and don't have to change our Movement that the country needs. One of the fundamental reasons I am standing is to implement legislation such as this and our Movement needs to make sure that everybody else in the Labour Party feels the same way and keep them committed to the New Deal. Please, vote for this motion, vote to keep us on it, vote for the New Deal, and on 4th July vote for Labour. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Matthew. A seconder?

WILLIAM PATERSON (London): President, Congress, we are in an historic general election now and that places important responsibilities upon us. There are powerful forces in our society that want Labour's New Deal or at the very least want a low fat version of it. We know this because over the last few months they have shown their hand. On 6<sup>th</sup> February, Rupert Soames said that the CBI was providing private feedback to Labour on its policy plans urging it to stop. On 15<sup>th</sup> February, the Institute of Directors and the British Chamber of Commerce laid in arguing that full implementation would impose costs on British business. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, Lord Mandelson urged Labour not to rush its union reforms and betray

business specifically arguing that Labour should not consider repealing any anti-trade union laws prior to those affected before the 2016 Trade Union Act. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, lobbyists were briefing the *Financial Times* that a new deal would be working and on 8<sup>th</sup> May we had a battle behind the scenes and in the papers over the draft New Deal and a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May with all the affiliated unions which agreed a joint statement committing to what was agreed at last year's National Policy Forum. That was a good thing but it is a fact that the commitment to fair pay agreements has been won under social care in the first term. That is vital and desperately needed but, Congress, the lesson of the last few months is clear, we must use all the pressure we can bring to bear because there are people who will push the Labour government constantly and try to undermine the New Deal in the same way they tried to undermine the National Minimum Wage. Congress, I urge you to support the composite. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bill. Thank you. The mover of Motion 182?

## **LABOUR PARTY IN POWER**

### **MOTION 182**

#### **182. LABOUR PARTY IN POWER**

This Congress notes that the Labour Party's "Fair Deal for Working People", if implemented, will strengthen the rights of employees, and of trade unions.

However, this Congress further notes that Labour Councils, during the last year, in for example, Colchester and Swindon, have used every unscrupulous, trade union busting trick in the book, seeking to prevent GMB from advancing the interests of our members.

This Congress believes that some Labour politicians like to stand in front of our banners for photo opportunities and take our members' money, but fall out with us as soon as we start doing our job as an effective trade union.

This Congress believes almost all GMB members will be glad to see the back of the Conservative government. Many GMB members and activists will welcome a Labour government and will campaign for a Labour victory.

However, Congress also believes that our members deserve better than the union busting from some Labour run local authorities

Congress resolves to judge Labour politicians by their actions and not on their promises.

#### **W15 THREE SHIRES BRANCH**

##### **Southern Region**

(*Referred*)

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): What a state this country is in. What a state. We have a Conservative Prime Minister, a Conservative Prime Minister, disrespecting our nation's history and disrespecting our Armed Forces by cutting and running from the beaches of Normandy. Absolutely disgraceful. (*Applause*) They have got to

go. They have got to go. It can't be soon enough to get rid of this shambles. But why as a Labour Party member, I first joined the Labour Party in 1974, why am I not more excited about the prospect of a landslide government. I will tell you, there are two reasons. One, our experience in Southern Region of newly elected Labour councils is where those councils have used every bullyboy tactic against our members and against the union, because they believe in nothing and they think they are being the grown-ups by just listening to the officers and then telling us what the council officers think as if we are children. That is completely unacceptable.

The other thing is that I have had the privilege of sitting in some of the selection committees where we are interviewing the people who are prospective Labour candidates and I have to say they are disappointing many of them. They have no life experience. They do not know anything. If they ever had an original idea it has died of loneliness, and they believe in nothing. (*Applause*) It is a problem if the party does not believe in anything. What do we believe in? We believe in standing up for our work colleagues, standing up for our communities, and building solidarity and helping people. That is our value and those values used to be recognised in the Labour Party, one of the greatest thinkers in the Labour Party, 100 years ago, R. H. Tawney, said one of the worst aspects of capitalism is that it forces people to be selfish and stops people acting in solidarity and building their communities. He said because the unions do that then we are the beating moral heart of the labour Movement. We are the ones that bring the moral compass to Labour. Gordon Brown recognised this when he said, "Labour is best when it is Labour." We absolutely have to call the Labour Party when it is elected to account for actions not words; the promises are great, they love standing in front of our banners, they love taking our money, they love the photographs, but are they going to follow through and work for working people deliver for GMB members. That is what needs to happen.

Now, comrades, we need a better government, we absolutely need a Labour government. I want Keir Starmer to succeed because we need a good government that works for this country, we absolutely need that, and every moment that Keir Starmer is working to deliver for our members we will work with him, we will cooperate, we will build and support that Labour government but if they do not, if they let us down, if they don't implement this New Deal for Working People, if they don't bring in the legislation to make life better for working people in this country, then, well, Nigel Farage answered the question, he said, "It is inevitable that there will be a Labour government. The question is, who is the opposition?" If Keir Starmer and the Labour Party let us down, reluctantly we may be that opposition. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. A seconder?

JONATHAN WATTS (Southern): Congress, this is about the Labour Party in power and it has been disappointing. Let me tell you, when Labour took over control of the Swindon Council last year, GMB had lost union recognition. Previously the GMB would not be recognised. The reason was GMB members, social workers, had a number of strikes. Underhand union-busting tactics were introduced and as a result the majority of children who needed specialists employed, those senior social workers, managers, told the GMB that children are being put at risk. It is shocking to us that a Labour council prioritised cooperation with the GMB rather than genuine concern for their own staff. Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jonathan. Well done. Does anyone wish to oppose those motions? No? Then I can ask Gary Harris to respond on behalf of the CEC, please.

GARY HARRIS (CEC) responding on behalf of the CEC to Composite 10 and Motion 182. We welcome Composite 10 and its commitment to campaigning to defend Labour's New Deal for working people. The CEC is supporting this composite with qualifications. First of all, the individual rights that the composite mentions are only a limited number of policies contained in the New Deal. We cannot forget the collective employment rights that GMB has been fighting for in the New Deal, including greater rights and freedoms for trade unions. These rights will not come without repealing the Tories' anti-trade union laws. The timing of the general election means that we are expecting the Labour Party election manifesto any day now, but additional wording was agreed within Labour's National Policy Forum final stage reports stating that Labour will update trade union legislation and remove unnecessary restrictions on trade union activity. Our qualification is that this commitment should cover clauses that restrict trade union activity in line with GMB's longstanding policy that all anti-trade union legislation should be repealed. Thirdly, around outsourcing the final stage National Policy Forum Report commits Labour to bringing about the biggest wave of in-sourcing of public services in a generation. Our qualification is that's the commitment to reinstate and strengthen the two-tier code was a GMB priority achievement and our understanding is that it does not override the policy contained in the 2021 Green Paper. Fourthly, the proposed fair pay agreement in social care is desperately needed. There should be priority given to the low levels of pay opportunities and value placed on workers in that sector. GMB has pushed for legal underpinning for further fair pay agreements and we want to see collective bargaining extended across the economy. Our qualification is that the sectors to be covered would need to be supported by our members through our industrial democratic

structures. We know that the New Deal for Working People has come under attack internally and externally of the Labour Party, including from employers, and the last few weeks in particular we have seen that GMB has stood strong with other unions throughout. We continue to work closely with affiliated unions through the TULO and the TUC, where appropriate. Our qualification is that naturally TULO must take the leading role in the fight in coordinating the work of Labour affiliated unions.

The CEC is asking for Motion 182 to be referred so we can look at how widespread these practices are across local government. GMB is clear that no local authority, let alone a Labour-run authority, should be using union-busting practices. We are conscious that only two local authorities are named in this motion and more work needs to be done to address the matter. Therefore, the CEC is asking for composite 10 to be supported with the qualifications set out and for Motion 182 to be referred for the reasons outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Thank you. Does London Region accept the qualification on Composite 10? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Southern accept to refer? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will put the composite, then. All those in favour of Composite 10 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Composite 10 was CARRIED*

*Motion 182 was REFERRED.*

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

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Industrial & Economic Policy: Public Section. Could I ask the mover of Motion 156 to come to the rostrum and could others be ready, 150, 151, and 152 to come down for their speeches. Thank you..

### **NHS STAFF PAY STRUCTURE**

#### **MOTION 156**

##### **156. NHS STAFF PAY/STRUCTURE**

This Congress, while the Government refuses to negotiate with NHS staff, we see nurses, junior doctors and other healthcare staff very dissatisfied with their salaries and even some leaving the service.

This causes much resentment and dissatisfaction, a broken NHS service and patients waiting too long for treatment and having to turn to the private sector. This will lead to the demise of our NHS system which has been going strong for over 75 years.

We ask Congress to fully support the other health service unions in their fight for fair pay.

### **C35 ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH**

**London Region**



(Carried)

CRISTINA PICU (London): Good morning, President. Good morning, Congress. First time delegate and first time speaker. (*Applause*) I am proud to be a GMB representative and a secretary in C33 Branch, supporting hundreds of NHS members in London NHS Trust. Our members know the NHS is at breaking point. The number of patients on waiting lists has extended to over seven million over the last 14 years. Waiting times have also massively increased for everything from GP appointments to A&E. The pressure this causes on NHS staff is huge, with extra hours in the weekends to try and bring the waiting times down. The pay for unsociable hours is ridiculously low and more and more members of staff are giving up working for NHS and moving to the private sector or even abroad. It is not a coincidence that NHS is failing to recruit and retain staff because of the Government's total failure to fund properly NHS workforce. It is not a coincidence that the pressure on NHS has increased. We still have over 100,000 unfilled vacancies in NHS in England alone. The vast majority of NHS workers have seen their pay fall in real terms since 2010 and we are falling behind the rest of the world. Our NHS members work incredibly hard doing the tiring and absolutely vital work across the country. During the pandemic these workers were on the front line. We clapped for them and we called them heroes but when the time came to truly recognise their sacrifices they were forgotten. Whoever forms the next government must start immediate pay negotiations to increase NHS staff pay. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Cristina. A seconder to Motion 156?

BHIMRAJ RAI (London): President, Congress, I am a first time delegate, a first time speaker. (*Applause*) Members I represent work in London not with NHS Trust, but the trust is managed with time for the operation in London, a direct region of the NHS staff. Support the call for member colleagues and appreciation for the work they do. The next government must concentrate on urgent steps to make sure that outsourced NHS staff work just as hard as the directly employed staff. Congress, there are hundreds of members working in the major hospitals and like our friend in the Midlands we have disputes over the disgraceful NHS pay deal for staff. We were not told that payment was a thank you payment offer and despite all their hard work they are thousands of pounds worse off. Congress, if it is a private company earning millions of pounds they can and they must pay the workers what they deserve, money that should have been given to our members over a year ago, and I am bound to say we are on track for the industry with the announcement of staff pay deal. I would like to say thank you to the regions, London, Warrington, Gavin and Jack, who supported me strongly and who are not

a hospital member. So, Congress I hope you will support us in this dispute and our demand that our trusted staff will be included in all future NHS pay deals. Thank you. I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Perfect timing. Well done. The mover of Motion 157, please? 157? You are coming. Okay.

**NHS AMBULANCE WORKERS' PENSION AND RETIREMENT AGE SHOULD BE ALIGNED WITH OTHER EMERGENCY "BLUE-LIGHT" SERVICE WORKERS**  
**MOTION 157**

**157. NHS AMBULANCE WORKERS' PENSION AND RETIREMENT AGE SHOULD BE ALIGNED WITH OTHER EMERGENCY 'BLUE-LIGHT' SERVICE WORKERS**

This Congress recognises NHS ambulance workers are very often the first healthcare professionals the public will come into contact with when they become ill or suffer from any sort of trauma. Likewise, we all watch those documentary series which portray the ambulance travelling extremely fast on blue-lights to someone in distress or with an injury – and we as viewers share that sense of relief as the ambulance crew or the rapid response car arrives on scene, because we know that the injured person will be okay now – as the NHS professionals have arrived and will make this person well again.

But do you ever think what happens to that ambulance worker of the long-term effects that this has? As you become older, many ambulance workers suffer with common medical ailments of stomach and abdominal problems, muscular-skeletal problems in back, neck, knees and shoulders, as well as suffering problems associated with mental health. When you compare the ailments to the nature of the work of ambulance personnel – there are clear links. Many ambulance workers don't often retire at full retirement age because of illness or injury and will often have their careers terminated well before this.

Given the medical conditions outlined, many ambulance workers will be expected to work beyond their retirement age of 66 years, as currently there is no provision for ambulance workers to retire with full unreduced benefits at the age of 60 years, like those workers in the Fire or Police services.

There had been a scheme within the NHS called 'Special Classes' which although now closed, did apply to some Nurses, Physiotherapists, Midwives, Health Visitors and Health Care Assistants – if the criteria were met.

We ask that the GMB campaign on behalf of ambulance workers only, to pursue a comparative pension retirement age either to that of the Fire and Police services or consideration for an NHS 'Special Class' arrangement that was utilised before for some NHS workers.

**N61 NWAS BRANCH**  
**North West & Irish Region**

(*Carried*)

COLIN STOREY (North West & Irish): Morning, President, Congress. First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) NHS ambulance workers are often the first healthcare professionals the public will come into contact with when they become ill or suffer some trauma. Likewise, we all watch the documentary programmes with the ambulance travelling extremely fast on blue lights to someone in distress or with an injury. We share the same sense of relief as the

ambulance arrives on scene because we know that the injured person will be okay now and the NHS professional has arrived and will make the person well again. Do you ever think what happens to the ambulance worker and the long-term effect this has. As you become older many ambulance workers suffer common medical ailments such as stomach and abdominal problems, muscular skeletal problems in the back, neck, knees, and shoulders, as well as problems associated with mental health. When you compare the ailments to the nature of the work of ambulance personnel there are clear links. Many ambulance workers do not often retire at full retirement age because of illness or injury and employment is terminated well before this. In fact, almost 75% of ambulance staff finish work on the grounds of ill health before the age of 60 compared to a figure of 43% for the whole of the NHS. Given medical conditions outlined many ambulance workers will be expected to work beyond the retirement age of 66. Currently, there is no provision for ambulance workers to retire with full unreduced benefits at the age of 60 like those workers in the fire and police services. Lord Hutton in his 2011 report said that independent public services, pensions, commissions, stated: "However, for the uniformed services, the armed forces, police and fire fighters, where pension age has been lowered to reflect the unique nature of their work a pension age of 60 is appropriate." Did he just forget to include the ambulance service or was that an intentional act? There has been a scheme in the NHS called Special Classes which although now closed did apply to some nurses, physiotherapists, midwives, health visitors, and healthcare assistants, if the criteria were met. Again this did not include ambulance workers. Make your own mind up as to why.

We ask the GMB to campaign on behalf of ambulance workers only to pursue a comparative pension and retirement age with the fire and police services or consideration for an NHS special class arrangement that would be utilised for some NHS workers. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Seconder?

ANDREW RAFFERTY (North West & Irish): Good morning, Congress. Good morning, President. First time delegate and first time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, it is a disgrace that NHS ambulance staff do not avail of the same pension provisions as other emergency blue-light service workers do. It is crucial that we lobby the UK government for a crucial change in policy granting NHS ambulance staff the same rate as police staff to retire early with full pension. These frontline heroes dedicate their lives to saving others, often facing intense physical and emotional strain. Yet unlike their counterparts in law enforcement they are denied the option of early retirement with financial security. The gruelling demands of their profession take a toll on their wellbeing leading to burnout and compromised

health. By allowing NHS ambulance staff the same retirement benefits as other blue-light emergency staff we not only recognise their invaluable service but crucially prioritise their welfare. These brave individuals deserve our unwavering support and recognition for their sacrifices. Let us stand together and urge the UK Government to rectify this disparity ensuring that those who dedicate their lives to saving others can retire with dignity and security. Congress, I urge you to back the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Andrew. The mover of Emergency Motion 1?

## **NHS PAY EMERGENCY MOTION 1**

### **EMERGENCY MOTION ONE - NHS Pay**

On 30th May 2024 parliament was dissolved.

The NHS pay deal was under negotiation at this point. The government could have used the wash up period to confirm the settlement.

When a new government is introduced, we are calling on them to make the NHS pay deal a top priority of the new administration. Furthermore, we are calling on them to negotiate with unions and not just with the pay review body.

### **S30 SHEFFIELD HEALTH BRANCH North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

(*Carried*)

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire, & Humber): Congress, I have stood here for years at Congress and spoke on the NHS crisis and how this Government are trying to destroy it and this year I was going to have a quiet Congress and keep my gob shut but this has wound me and my branch up, so here I am again. Sorry. The NHS is still a mess as it has been for years and Rishi tells us waiting lists are falling, We know they are going up, either he can't do his maths, which, with the state of the economy I can well believe, or he tells fibs. He laughed at a GP yesterday for calling him out and she was belittled by his mates. We know he is not interested in the NHS. During the wash-up he definitely missed the boat with us. The general election push taking over, Parliament dissolved, and he brushed our pay rise in purdah. Not only have we had a year-on-year pay cut but he has ignored us again. We have doctors still striking with no negotiations. He needs to hang his head in shame on what he has done to the NHS. When the new government is elected they need to make the NHS their priority and if that is a Labour government then remember your roots, remember who made the NHS

and look after the patients as well but we need to look after the staff, who are on their knees. The Pay Review Body has constantly worked with the Tories for the last 15 years to cut our pay in real terms. They do not like negotiating with us but that is irrelevant today as instead of looking at our pay in April as they should have they have stalled it, never cleared it in wash-up, so again we wait with some NHS staff being paid one pence over the national minimum wage. We call on Congress that if we return a Labour government on 4<sup>th</sup> July we ask them to negotiate with the unions, with us, on a worthwhile negotiable pay deal that for the first time in a while makes us feel valued and needed, and that we will work with them to make our NHS better. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. A seconder?

HOLLY JOHNSTON (North East, Yorkshire, & Humber): I think this motion highlights the importance of the need for a PRB altogether and have direct negotiations, and also a need for the health unions to work together and coordinate in our actions. The period of purdah and formation of a new government implies that NHS workers are unlikely to witness any pay rise until after the summer recess in September. The prospect of an extended rate for fair compensation is disheartening for the dedicated individuals who tirelessly serve the nation's healthcare needs. We are all sat waiting time and time again, we need direct negotiations to ensure it is on time and pay is made a priority every year. Our patients, our staff, and our service cannot wait any longer. We have millions on waiting lists, patient safety is at risk every day, and staff are undervalued, underappreciated, and are leaving in droves for better pay and conditions. No pay offer is the same as a nought percent pay offer. Fair pay is vital to having a well staffed workforce, which we need all the time, but especially to get and see the millions on waiting lists. Staff are already working overtime and we cannot rely on this as part of the workforce plan, nor the use of the private sector. Pay must be a priority for the incoming government and they must get to work straightaway and we must be ready if these issues have not gone away, and things are only getting worse. We have to be ready with action and demands if an incoming government continue to kick this down the road. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Holly. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? No? In that case can I ask Mary Hutchinson, on behalf of the CEC, to respond.

MARY HUTCHINSON (CEC): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Emergency Motion 1. The CEC supports the motion as it is certainly something we would expect a new government to prioritise. Our small qualification is that

the pay award was not under negotiation as we were waiting on the PRB to report. However, the process has been delayed due to the Government delaying asking them to report and also because they refused negotiation with the union. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Does North East, Yorkshire, & Humber, accept the qualification on Emergency Motion 1? (*Agreed*) Thank you. The CEC is supporting Motions 156 and 157, and there has been no opposition so I will take them as one fact. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? They are both carried.

*Motion 156 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 157 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Emergency Motion 1 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Emergency Motion 1 was CARRIED.*

INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: PUBLIC SECTION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Industrial & Economic Policy: Public Section. Could I have the mover of Motion 150 to the rostrum, please.

## **THE NHS: A PERILOUS CAREER MOTION 150**

### **150. THE NHS: A PERILOUS CAREER**

This Congress notes in December 2021 within the NHS guidelines which were drawn up to protect staff working during Covid-19.

These guiding principles have extended beyond the stresses of the pandemic and exposing that which we all knew; that the NHS was in trouble well before Covid.

The principles protect staff from being able to work in situations where they cannot practice, adhering to their Professional regulators, NMC and HCPC to name two. Staff were protected in using their professional judgment during this time.

We were informed at this time in 2021, that this was in full support of these professional regulators. There is no further guidance after this. The NHS is struggling, and staff are anxious.

Our members are still using their professional judgement even now because the Tory government have the NHS on its knees.

Are the professional regulators still recognising these guidelines?

We as Union reps will probably be the first to know.

We call on Congress to protect our members by seeking clarity on how broadly these guidelines are being recognised within the practicalities of the current workplace.

We ask Congress to examine their own places of work and the balance of safety versus productivity. We call upon GMB as a union to increase the training available to support their stewards during these convoluted and perplexing times.

**G89 – GLASGOW NE AND SW HEALTH SERVICE**  
**GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

CIORSTAI DH REICHL E (GMB Scotland): For far too long we in the NHS have been working in uncertain times. The word “extremis” is now the justification for substandard care of both patients and staff. During Covid we were all assured that our professional registration was safe, that providing we were showing professional judgement then during these times of “extremis” we would be protected. It is now 2024 and the word “extremis” is still being used and we are still being told just use clinical judgement.

Congress, the Tories and the SNP have the NHS on its knees with no intention of throwing a life saving move. I can speak for the situation in Scotland but I have no doubt it is no different elsewhere in the UK. Senior management are telling our members that they will be protected. That is the problem, we are not sure. The management approach this with silence. Members have been working with no support or guidance. They have been left in a working environment that is becoming perilous to our careers.

Congress, as a union with members in the NHS we should be seeking clarification on what the word “extremis” means to NHS staff governing bodies. I am sure they will find a different view of the situation. We call upon Congress for help and support for the initial guidance released in 2021 and the lack of updated information. We call upon Congress to seek clarity on how broadly these guidelines are being used within the practicality of the current working environment of the NHS. The expectation of increased productivity over safety and staff should never be accepted. This can happen in any workplace or industry and we need to be educated and equipped with the tools to be vigilant and ready to challenge both management and government as to what the word “extremis” means now. The NHS was not created to serve the government. It was created to serve the people. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ciorstaidh. A seconder?

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): Before I actually go into my speech I just want to give solidarity to all our fellow NHS nurses across the rest of the UK and that emergency motion about pay. (*Applause*) Also, I want actually to give a shout out to all the NHS workers in Scotland who due to securing a strike mandate last year, early 2023, for our last pay deal, we have now secured what will be in two years' time a 36-hour working week and that is for agenda for change NHS workers across Scotland. (*Applause*) Well done. Solidarity to you. I hope that the rest of the UK can fight for the same, and there are other things I am not going into. That is not this speech.

As you have already heard from Ciorstaidh, the term "extremis" was coined at the time during Covid when NHS staff providing they were showing professional judgement and using clinical judgement they would be protected; indeed, we need to know what the word "extremis" means now in 2024. Just let me take you back to pre-Covid. Pre Covid there was a staffing crisis. The NHS under Tory and SNP rules for well over a decade has been brought to its knees; in fact, I would say it has gone beyond that. We all know staffing is an issue and there are real term pay cuts affecting the treatment and retention. We know that staff have had to work below what would be considered safe staffing levels for a considerable length of time and this is before Covid is even a known thing. Then during Covid things changed for us all, with the NHS working without safe staffing levels did not begin to happen. They were already happening. This time the Government added the word "extremis" to the description of the times we were in. As my colleague said, with guiding principles from 2021 that have not been updated and what the word "extremis" means now needs to be looked at. The principles protected staff from being able to work in situations where they cannot practise adhering to their professional regulators. One example would be the low stage clapping levels. What is clear, and I think this is a really, really important point, if during Covid NHS staff were to be protected when using their professional and clinical judgement because they were not able to practise adhering to their professional regulators and my example of having to work below safe staffing levels and this is what "extremis" is, then the NHS was in a state of "extremis" long, long, long before we even had Covid and still continues today. In fact, the state of "extremis" has been the position of the NHS for a very, very long time. Yes, we need to be equipped to be able to challenge management and government as to what the word "extremis" means now and when Covid was at its height pressures could be understood but what is really needed is proper investment in the NHS to take the NHS out of the permanent state of "extremis" or nothing is ever going to change. Please support this motion. I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. I call the mover of Motion 151.



**BETTER TRAINING FOR HOSPITAL CONSULTANTS AND STAFF WHEN TREATING PATIENTS WITH SEVERE ME/CFS OR SEVERE LONG COVID  
MOTION 151**

**151. BETTER TRAINING FOR HOSPITAL CONSULTANTS AND STAFF WHEN TREATING PATIENTS WITH SEVERE ME/CFS OR SEVERE LONG COVID**

Congress notes that when well-known/ famous people suffering from these conditions die in hospital because Consultants, Doctors and Nurses do not know how to treat them appropriately and effectively, it can make headline news in newspapers and the media ('His decline shows Covid can kill long after the virus has gone', Sunday Times 7.1.24). However, many more "ordinary people" suffering from these conditions experience the same fate.

It is therefore necessary to urge the NHS to arrange for hospital Consultants, Doctors and Nurses to update their knowledge on how to treat patients suffering from severe post-viral fatigue syndrome such as ME/CFS (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) or severe Long Covid - these conditions are very similar. NICE Guidelines on ME/CFS have been revised and updated in 2021.

Covid 19 infections can result in organ damage affecting the heart, lungs, kidneys, skin and brain, as well as causing inflammation and problems with the immune system, apart from cognitive impairments and other mental problems. NHS information on Long Covid is readily available on the Internet.

We urge GMB to put pressure on the NHS to deal with this situation and arrange for Hospital Consultants and staff to upgrade their knowledge of treating patients with severe ME/CFS or severe Long Covid appropriately and effectively.

**R27 REDBRIDGE BRANCH  
London Region**

*(Carried)*

STEPHEN JONES (London): President and Delegates, I am moving Motion 151: Better Training for Hospital Consultants. When inappropriate and negligent treatment of ME/CFS sufferers or Long Covid sufferers affected relatives and friends of celebrities or politicians their concerns tend to be published in the newspapers and/or in the media generally. Recently, Sajid Javid, the former Health Secretary, reported on a debate on ME/CFS, which is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, held in Westminster Hall in May of this year, where he highlighted the distressing battle he has experienced with ME/CFE which a relative of his has. The Labour MP, Ferley Anderson, also spoke of such struggles for three of her constituents. *The Times* reported on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 that Javid said: "ME patients are too often dismissed by medics". It seems that 62 deaths have been attributed to ME since 2017. Apparently, the Government have been working on a care overhaul plan for these patients for more than two years. That is quite a long time. But its publication has been delayed and it is still outstanding. Javid stressed the urgent need of its publication. The fate of many severely-ill Long Covid sufferers is equally concerning and a significant number of approximately two million such sufferers are potentially affected by the lack of appropriate guidance for surgeons and hospital staff generally. We urge the GMB to do all it can locally as well as

nationally to press for better training of hospital surgeons and staff in treating such seriously ill patients. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. Secunder?

TONY DUNCAN (London): I am proud to second Motion 151 submitted by Redbridge Branch of the London Region. I am from the RCN Staff Branch. I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to second this motion by the local branch. As a registered nurse, we still all know members of the RCA and patients who are suffering with long-term conditions as a result of Covid. These people have a daily struggle and, as a result of this virus, which we still don't understand, they are still living a daily nightmare, very similar to what Simon from west Midlands about his friend and work colleague, Zowie.

Too many people in today's society are suffering in isolation. They have become distant from friends, families and, actually, work colleagues. The motion asks for more support. We truly believe that a new Labour Government will provide that support and we anticipate that support to come along to support any person with a long-term disability, up to and including long-term Covid.

We need to stop this argument about efficiency, payment by results and clearing the waiting lists – all important, as they are – but we actually need to give time, patience and tolerance to enable us to care for people. There is a simple word called 'kindness', and that's all that we are asking. If it was their mum, dad or loved one who was in that position, they would ask for kindness. That's all we want to give these people the best opportunity they possibly can have. We can make their lives better as a result and, as our slogan says, 'Make Life Better'. So, please, support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. I call the mover of Motion 152.

## **VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION. JUST ACCEPTED IN THE NHS MOTION 152**

### **152. VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION. JUST ACCEPTED IN THE NHS**

This congress notes that no one who applies for a position or enters a career in the NHS would expect to be physically abused, verbally or mentally abused daily.

So why then has it become the accepted view that it is permitted for the patients that are being treated in hospital, for the NHS employees to be treated this way? and for staff just to expect that this is the normal way your day should be.

The NHS staff have grave concerns that it is not known just how much physical violence that the staff have to put up with, punched, kicked, spat on, and that is when the staff are trying to treat the patient. This is where we need security, for everywhere in our NHS. This problem is embedded in all areas, not just, as the media suggests, at the front door of our hospitals.

No, this issue is not exclusive to our Emergency Departments. This is a community wide issue. We need to raise public awareness and for provisions to be made to provide a safe environment for all NHS staff. It will be up to the NHS to shout louder to the public so that our NHS staff is protected in their place of work.

**We call on Congress to support NHS workers as they strive for a violence free workplace.**

To encourage the government to supply every Health Board and Trust the finances to ensure that security measures are upgraded and where required, put in place.

**G89 – GLASGOW NE AND SW HEALTH SERVICE  
GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

MELANIE GALE (GMB Scotland): President, I am moving Motion 152: Violence and Aggression. Just Accepted in the NHS.

Why is violence and aggression acceptable? Why, in the NHS, do we accept to be verbally, mentally and physically abused? In the NHS on a day-to-day basis we are verbally abused by patients, relatives and even our own colleagues. Why do we allow this to happen? This is not just in an emergency department. This is all across our NHS, in our communities and also in our hospitals. I have experienced verbal and physical abuse on the wards. I am a nurse. I have had relatives screaming at me because I am busy with their relative and not able to give them an update. I have had patients squaring up to me or giving me a going over, near enough. I have had staff members flung down stairs because a patient didn't like them. So why do we keep carrying on with this violence and aggression? Where is our protection in all of this, and why do we accept it? Because we do. It's time to stop. We have no protection and no security in some of our hospitals.

We, in the NHS, and our GMB union need to make it clear that this is zero-tolerance, and we need to protect our staff. It is not acceptable to go to work every single day to face this. This is why I am saying that we do need security to be present in our hospitals to protect the staff. We also need to report these incidents as well. We can't just forget about it and go home. It's not acceptable. The day has come for all NHS workers to feel safe in their workplace. We provide an essential service as frontline workers, and this includes all NHS workers. We deserve to be protected in our workplace.

Congress, we need to make the public aware that it is not acceptable, and if we have security on our premises for the protection of all, we need to take this to the governments to make it very, very clear that we are not accepting this situation any more. We do require funding to ensure that all NHS workplaces have security.

We need to protect our staff. It's time to make our NHS safe. I ask Congress to, please, support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Melanie. Secunder?

ELIZABETH AIRNS (GMB Scotland): President, I am seconding Motion 152. I have been a mental health nurse for more than 28 years and also a victim of violence and aggression from patients and their families. This is not exclusive to adult services as I predominantly worked within older adult services, which is patients over 65. I was advised that this was part of the job and we just have to accept it. We should never accept any abuse in any workplace.

In 2021, following an NHS staff survey, it was reported that 14.3% of workers have experienced at least one act of physical violence. In that year alone, this is an average of 200 violent attacks a day on NHS staff which is unacceptable.

Whether the aggression is physical or verbal it can have a lasting effect on a person's mental health and wellbeing. This causes consultants and healthcare professionals having to take time off work or even leave an already depleted workforce.

Culture changes happen in many organisations and the NHS should be no different. A lack of resources places our workforce at risk on a daily basis which not only impacts on patient-centred care but it affects our NHS staff who are trying to deliver safe and effective patient care without the added risk of physical harm. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elizabeth. Well done. Does anyone wish to oppose those motions? (*No response*) No. Then I ask Penny Robinson from the CEC to respond, please.

PENNY ROBINSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 150 and 151. The CEC is supporting both of these motions with qualifications. On Motion 150, our qualification is that it is the employers' responsibility to train staff on local standards and policies. GMB's role is to train their reps with the skills and knowledge to spot issues and to make the changes. GMB can produce bespoke training as and when needed, and support members and reps in calling out when working conditions are not safe.

On Motion 151, this motion fits well with GMB's existing policy approach to Covid-19 and occupational ill-health more generally. The CEC's qualification is simply to recognise that different bodies are responsible for NHS training in the devolved

administrations. As a result, a single approach may not be appropriate, and GMB regions and nations may be better positioned to lobby for change and influence policy. Therefore, the CEC is asking for Congress to support Motions 150 and 151 with the qualifications set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Penny. Does GMB Scotland support the qualification on Motion 150. *(Agreed)* Does London accept the qualification on Motion 151? *(Agreed)* Thank you. All those in favour of Motion 150, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 151, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. The CEC is supporting Motion 152. All those in favour of that motion, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 150 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 151 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 152 was CARRIED.*

### **ACTIVIST SPEAKER – MARTINA VRAJITORU**

THE PRESIDENT: We are just going to take a break from the motions and turn to our Activist Speaker. I think we have seen over the past few years that the best contributions we have seen in this hall come from our activists, our lay members. I would like to invite our first Activist Speaker of the week to address Congress, Martina Vrajitoru, who is a rep based at Hinckley Point C. She has led fantastic campaigns down at Hinckley, and we have asked her to come and speak to you all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

MARTINA VRAJITORU (GMB Wales & South West): Good morning, President and Congress. Thank you for having me. What an honour! I'm a first-time speaker and first-time delegate. *(Applause)*

I am proud to be a woman working in the nuclear construction industry representing members in the South West Region at Hinckley Point C. I have diverse roles in my branch, both focusing on equality and diversity as well as women's specific needs in the construction industry. I am also a training officer for more than 70 reps within the branch.

I stand before you today to share a critical aspect of the daily life in construction safety. I want to highlight the branch achievements and their impact on the union and its members with a specific focus on women's safety. Historically, the construction industry was male dominated but times have changed and now women are joining the ranks. Our health and safety standards are playing catch-up and, as we celebrate 50 years of the 1974 Act we need to build on it. These

standards were defined at a time when women were almost non-existent in this industry.

Congress, I'm a proud member and proud to represent the GMB. We are a fair, inclusive and structured union and we must never stop working to provide a better society. During World War One Mary McArthur bravely fought to stop the barbaric practice of sweating women workers in ammunition factories. Forty years ago, Javine Desai fought for better wages and conditions. And today I fight for better health and safety standards for women tailored to our needs and representing our physiology and anatomy. So far I have been a rep for one year and in that time I hope we have made a significant impact.

Congress, let me tell you that women workers at the biggest construction site in Europe and the first nuclear site for 40 years in England had to wear men's clothing and safety boots. The employers called them 'Unisex clothes, Unisex boots and Unisex PPE'. I can tell you that there is no such thing. All unisex items are fundamentally designed with men's needs as far as their anatomy is concerned as the standard, but there were other problems. The design of the toilets on the site meant that women had to hold a foot in the door while using the toilet to block men from entering. Out of 114 companies operating on site, nearly half, including EDF, did not have a menopause policy in place. During the past year, after intense negotiations, women on site can now feel safe when using the toilet. We now have gender-specific and separate facilities accessible only to women. Additionally, we now have organic, sustainable sanitary provisions which are being provided free to women on site which was agreed with the employers. We have negotiated new safety trousers for women that are comfortable, suitable and sufficient at every moment of the month, made from flexible material which does not reveal the wearer's underwear or cut their blood flow when you have to remain in a stationary position or when bending over a metal cage to work. Our new boots have been designed specifically for women and provide the necessary support at the right places to stop the blisters. We don't have to wear three different sets of socks all year round to stop our feet from swimming in the men's boots. Women's feet are built differently and we have a unique need. It is imperative that the PPE must adapt to our requirements to keep our women workers safe. This journey for safer women's PPE was not straightforward. I had a few obstacles to navigate. As everybody in this hall knows, management doesn't just nod to any request and react swiftly. I can't even tell you how many meetings, phone calls and emails I attended and sent. But persistence, weekly messages asking about updates and pushy emails mentioning the severity of issues paid off.

As of Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> June, I can proudly say that thanks to GMB members' campaigning one of the biggest companies on the project started provided women-only PPE stores to stop the ridiculous waiting time of one month and more for the right size, which was in the end given to someone else, usually a man. *(Applause)* I am now proud to say that menopause policies are being implemented in every company we speak to and that we do not have to suffer pain or embarrassment or be punished for natural changes in our bodies. As a result of these victories, we have grown the Union. Everyone on site can see the way we stand up for members, no matter their gender or the colour of their skin or their religion. Everyone was delighted with the new PPE. Now we call for it to be a national standard. Congress, that is the campaign I will be taking up. With the help of my branch secretary, our HPC convenor and the regional officers, who were always there to help me and trust me, I am demanding, along with Ruth, Goylan and Mary, who always have their door open for me, that we start a national campaign to bring these improvements into statutory law on every single construction site in the UK. *(Applause and cheers)* As we say, good PPE is like a good friend: supportive, reliable and always there when you need it. I aim to continue advocating for women's specific health and safety standards and pushing for more inclusive policies within the construction industry. I want a future where our safety measures are not retro-fitted for women but are designed with us in mind from the start.

I urge all of you to support these initiatives and help create a safer and more inclusive workplace for all. Together we can ensure that our union remains at the forefront of progress and equality. Thank you for your time and attention. Let's build a future where everyone, regardless of gender, feels safe, valued and taken care of in their workplace. Remember, in construction, as in life, it is all about laying a strong foundation, preferably one that includes a good cup of tea and a safe working environment. Thank you. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Martina, I think you saw from the reaction in the hall how proud we are of you and how inspiring your speech was. Thank you for all the work you are doing on behalf of women in construction down at Hinckley Point C. When Gary and I visited the site, we saw the amazing work for ourselves when we went there. Thank you.

We now move back on to the motions. I ask the movers of Motions 218, 219 and 221 to come to the front, and then Composite 14 and Motion 214 to be ready as well.

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

### **HYDROGEN TRIAL COMMITMENT**

#### **MOTION 218**

##### **218. HYDROGEN TRIAL COMMITMENT**

We see congress support for worker involvement and political backing for trialing hydrogen in the gas networks, and for domestic heating.

We propose a motion seeking the union's support in advocating for political backing, particularly from the Labour Party, for the trial of hydrogen in domestic heating. This initiative aims to address environmental concerns while ensuring that workers' voices are actively involved to garner public willingness.

To solidify our commitment, we suggest including a request for the endorsement of hydrogen trials in domestic heating in the Labour Party's manifesto. Furthermore, we should consider an action to withdraw our support as a union on energy policy if this crucial inclusion is overlooked by ministers or councillors.

Hydrogen represents a sustainable solution for domestic heating, and political support, especially from a party with significant influence, is vital. The involvement of workers and the manifesto inclusion will ensure a comprehensive approach that aligns with both environmental goals and the interests of the workforce.

we kindly request the union's endorsement in championing this cause, emphasising the importance of worker involvement and manifesto inclusion to enhance public acceptance and support for hydrogen trials in domestic heating.

#### **S15 ENERGY BRANCH**

##### **North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Carried)*

JAMIE UTTLEY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, I am a British Gas rep. President, Delegates, Brothers and Sisters, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on this critical motion proposed by the S15 Energy Branch. Like Gary Smith, I also joined GMB on the first day of my apprenticeship at British Gas. Since then I have seen the industry change beyond recognition, and I am lucky enough to have been given the opportunity by the union to contribute to the discussion about the future of our industry. This is a serious moment for the future of energy in the UK and the workers who deliver it. It is completely obvious to anyone who is serious that the UK needs its own sustainable and stable energy sources for the future.

We believe that a core part of that stable energy model is getting serious about hydrogen and its role as one of the solutions in the green domestic heating area. As a gas man I am not afraid to say that the climate crisis demands urgent action. Hydrogen can be a clean and sustainable energy source, yet despite this the talk of its use in a domestic setting is too often considered controversial. To take the agenda forward, we have to get political and public support for hydrogen



trials. Today misinformation and fear mongering have closed down trials before they have barely begun. We have to cut through this nonsense and present the positive case for hydrogen, and that transition must be inclusive and just. We must ensure that the voices of workers are central. The trial of hydrogen domestic heating should not be a top-down decision imposed on its communities. It should be a shared effort that involves workers at every stage.

Our members on the frontlines have valuable insights and expertise that can help shape a more effective energy transition. Congress, it looks like we are just under a month away from a Labour Government and we must not waste this opportunity. We think we should take a bold stance. If a proper energy transition with workers at its heart is overlooked, we should consider withdrawing our support as a union on energy policy. This action is not taken lightly but it underscores the urgency and significance of the matter at hand. Our support must mean meaningful action towards a sustainable and work-inclusive future. Let us ensure that the transition to hydrogen and domestic heating is seen as a real solution and not just a token project. The collective voices of workers backed by political support is necessary to make this a reality. Together we can lead the way towards a greener and fairer future for all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie. Secunder?

PAUL HARGATE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Vice President, I am seconding Motion 218. In 1889 this great trade union was built off the gas industry, and we believe that the same gas industry will need to utilise greener hydrogen gas which has a substantial part to play in this country's energy requirements.

As my fellow British Gas engineer, Jamie, has outlined, there is a positive case for hydrogen. The future energy requirements for home heating will be a very different market. Other renewables, such as air-source heat pumps, will have their part to play, but it seems at the minute that hydrogen is a poor relation, getting very little in the way of good publicity compared to the millions being spent by the Government on grants for heat pumps.

Keir Starmer said that with a new and publicly-owned Great British Energy he wants to close the door on Putin. Well, producing green hydrogen in this country could very well be a part of this. This motion reiterates our commitment to keeping hydrogen high on the public and political agenda. If we don't play our part we will be left behind and our gas industry, that employs thousands of people, maintaining appliances and looking after the gas network, will, like the coal industry previously, be placed on the scrapheap. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call the mover of Motion 219.

## **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT NUCLEAR ENERGY MOTION 219**

### **219. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT NUCLEAR ENERGY**

This Congress recognises the past and present contribution of Scotland's nuclear energy sector and its workforce in providing a safe secure supply of electricity for home and commercial use as part of our vital UK independent energy mix.

Congress condemns the Scottish Government decision to utilise if required devolved planning laws to block any replacement of new nuclear power in Scotland.

Congress therefore calls on the Scottish Government to end its opposition to new evolving nuclear technology as a part of the UK energy mix.

### **H60 – NUCLEAR AND GMB PRIVATE SECTION GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

DAVID FERGUSON (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am David Ferguson from GMB Scotland, workplace and safety rep for Hunterston B Nuclear Power Station. I'm a first-time delegate and speaker. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 219.

Congress, I have worked in nuclear power stations for 10 years. Both my grandfather and father also worked in the industry. I've worked at Hinckley, Sizewell, Dungeness, Torness, Hartlepool and now Hunterston. There is also the planning of Sizewell C. There is the stability that that brings to those areas as workers transition from stations at the end of life to new stations. We could have been going through that transition in the west of Scotland with the Hunterston C but, sadly, for generations of workers on the west coast that is not to be because the Scottish Government opposes all new nuclear builds.

When Hunterston B was a running station it employed around 650 people. As we went to defueling we dropped to 420 and now as we are going into decommissioning, we will go down to about 240 for a while and then until we are all gone.

I have worked, as a boy, at the great shipbuilding towns of Greenock and Port Glasgow, which is just north of me, which have lost most of their shipyards and had a devastating effect on the area. A way of life was ingrained but resulted in people scratching for jobs. All the skills were lost and with working-class people

struggling to find new careers. Mining towns across Scotland have suffered the same fate as well. With the end of Hunterston, this situation has been repeated, a site which, for 60 years, has provided thousands of jobs for the towns of Largs, West Kilbride, Saltcoats, Ardrossan and Stevenson. The skills here will be lost. That's another industry gone and workers looking for new careers. Already they are heading abroad to places like Abu Dhabi.

I know that people have concerns about nuclear – I did before I started working there coming from a construction background – but there is no one who takes safety more seriously than nuclear workers. Once I started I quickly realised how safe power stations were in comparison to building sites. I came to learn that people living in Aberdeen receive more radiation per year because of the granite rock they live on than most nuclear workers do. The nuclear industry is so safety conscious that nuclear safety is our overriding priority and it's written in stone at the entrance to every power station. Even the back-up safety systems have back-up systems.

With Hunterston A and B providing safe and reliable energy to the grid for 60 years, it has a proven track record for the industry and for our country. So it is time for a change in the way the Scottish Government looks at the nuclear industry. There could have been a Hunterston C, a Torness B and a mini reactor at Ardea.

Congress, it is time for the Scottish Government to end its opposition to new evolving nuclear technology. It is part of our energy mix. If we are not careful, we will be back to the good old days of power cuts and candles. Congress, support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Secunder?

ANNETTE DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): Vice President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 219. For decades nuclear energy has been a key part of the UK's energy infrastructure. This is particularly true in Scotland. Scotland has generated the most nuclear energy proportionately of the four UK nations. With climate change, the need for nuclear and reaching net-zero has never been clearer. With Hunterston in Ayrshire and Torness in East Lothian, both are definitely placed for new development. The opportunity is staring us in the face. But the Scottish Government's response has been to threaten and block any and every single proposal for nuclear energy in Scotland. This is an ideological position which undermines the creation of new jobs in Scotland and forcing the highly-skilled and well-paid jobs that we currently have to go elsewhere. Those workers will

also take their taxes, further undermining the tax base of the Scottish Government which relies on its funding for our public services.

We are told that we can rely on wind to meet our clean energy needs, but in Scotland the Scottish Government sold the rights to our seabed for a bargain price. Contracts after contracts have gone to free ports on the other side of the world where human rights and workers' rights are nowhere to be seen, while the Scottish fabricators like Rosen and Methyl rot. If the Scottish Government were able to import nuclear energy from elsewhere, I am sure they would. It was also unclear as to how they intend to keep the lights on and our homes warm when the wind isn't blowing.

Now that the Greens have been unceremoniously punted from the Scottish Government, it is time for the plans to be put in place to take advantage of the next wave of nuclear development, which is planned for across the rest of the UK, Europe and the world. Likewise, with the change in leadership of the SNP, it is time for them to see sense and seize the opportunity to build Scotland's industrial base, our skills and energy security to build net zero. Nuclear's track record is clear. It's a stable source of energy, vital to our energy mix and national security. We need plans, not bans. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Annette. I call the mover of Motion 221.

**ROYAL SOCIETY SAY CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE UNDERESTIMATES NUMBER OF DAYS WITH NO WIND  
MOTION 221**

**221. ROYAL SOCIETY SAY CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE UNDERESTIMATES NUMBER OF DAYS WITH NO WIND**

This Congress is alarmed by the media reports that Sir Chris Llewellyn Smith, who led a Royal Society study on future energy supply, said that the Climate Change Committee only "looked at a single year" of data showing the number of windy days in a year when it advised the UK Government on the extent to which the UK could rely on wind and solar farms to meet net zero.

When Sir Chris presented the study in autumn 2023, he said of Climate Change Committee "They have conceded privately that that was a mistake."

By contrast the Royal Society study relied on 37 years of weather data.

In January 2024 Sir Chris, an emeritus professor and former director of energy research at Oxford University, said that the remarks to which he was referring were made by Chris Stark the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) chief executive. He said: "Might be best to say that Chris Stark conceded that my comment that the CCC relied on modelling that only uses a single year of weather data ... is 'an entirely valid criticism'."

Congress notes that this is not some trivial matter.

The advice of the Climate Change Committee to the UK Government in 2019 about the resilience of intermittent energy sources in 2050 was based on the assumption that there would be only seven days in the year when the output of the wind turbines would be less than 10% of the nameplate capacity.

GMB's own studies of the track record of the wind capacity installed found that on average there is one in six days over a year when this happens. Other studies showed similar results for 2018 (56 days), 33 days in 2019 and 30 days in 2020.

The implication of this serious underestimate for periods when there is no wind is that energy storage (possibly hydrogen based) will have to be massively increased or there has to be a continuing reliance on other energy sources such as gas until energy storage is viable and economic to deal with the risks of power cuts and blackouts. These are the laws of physics and engineering and are unavoidable.

GMB Congress 2023 Congress called on the CEC to try to persuade the Labour Party to drop its commitment to net zero electricity generation by 2030 on the grounds that it was simply not viable. The Labour Party has not walked away from this unviable commitment.

This is a critical issue. The reputation of the Labour Party for competent government will be destroyed if there are avoidable power cuts and blackouts because the leadership didn't heed the advice of the Congress of a major affiliated energy union and a founder member of the Labour Party.

Congress calls on the CEC and the General Secretary to implore Sir Keir Starmer and his Shadow Cabinet to use the Royal Society study as a sufficient reason to revisit this 2030 commitment and to put before the electorate a viable plan for net zero electricity generation.

This has to recognise that there is no viable alternative back up energy source other than gas currently available. It is time to go back to the drawing board and listen to the advice of the scientists, engineers and energy specialists.

## **G20 ENERGY CENTRAL BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

SIMEON DOHERTY (London): President Congress, I move Motion 221 on the Climate Change Committee. This motion was brought forward when it was said that the Climate Change Committee had based its advice to the Government on wrong information and the periods when there will be no output of wind and solar electricity. The periods are far longer than the Climate Change Committee advised, and these are the consequences in the real world.

The first consequence is the amount of back-up electricity capacity that has to be deliverable or on standby to cover such periods. This feeds into higher household electricity bills to cover the cost of this back-up capacity. The second consequence is the question about what power-generation technology would be used to provide the back-up capacity and when it is likely to be available at scale.

The 2023 Congress recognised that, currently, there is no alternative to gas and no prospect for any realistic alternative before 2030. So there are a couple of omissions. Alternatives to electricity by 2030 is a non-starter.

This motion calls on the Labour Party leadership via this Congress to commit to achieving zero carbon generation by 2030 and make proper investment in the manufacturing sector based on the global green energy attainments. Congress needs to be persuaded that the Labour Party does not have the ability to by-pass the laws of physics, nor to overcome the current lack of a viable alternative to gas, where on the one in six days there is no wind and every night where there is no sun. Yet so far Labour persists with this 2030 zero-carbon emission electricity pledge.

The energy policy launched by the Labour leadership in Scotland two weeks ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> May, repeated the pledge but this time there was a mention of a role for gas, with plans for carbon capture and storage. As the CEC qualification says, the actual wording of the manifesto yet to be published will be hugely important. It is of the utmost importance that the Labour leadership is finalising the manifesto commitment wording. Just listen to the advice of this Congress on this issue. The reputation of the entire Labour movement for sound and competent government is on the line on this point. If Congress is not listened to, there will be avoidable power cuts and blackouts where there is no electricity from the installed wind and solar capacity. It will make no difference even if Labour meets its targets to double or triple this capacity. Labour has to recognise that until facility for carbon capture and storage is developed at scale and at affordable prices, there is no alternative to gas for back-up electricity generation.

There is an enormous amount of investment worldwide into alternative energy sources and energy storage technologies. Investment is very important. The latest date to achieve net zero is 2050. Labour can afford to be flexible with the 2030 target. I call on Congress to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simeon. Seconder?

BRENDAN DUFFIELD (London): Congress, I am seconding Motion 221 on the Climate Change Committee. Around the world people use more than 10 billion tonnes of fossil fuel every year. We need to replace all of that with clean energy that doesn't cause pollution. It's like having to climb a really big hill to reach our goal by 2050. The target is 17,000 gigawatts and there is good news about things getting better. In 2023 the world added 500 gigawatts of new renewable energy. That's eight times more than what the UK currently has. Over the next six years we might add another 3,700 gigawatts. By 2028 the world could have about 7,000 gigawatts of renewable energy, mostly from solar power.

The UK's 2008 Climate Act helped by supporting companies to develop solar and wind energy. However, a mistake was made when the UK didn't make sure that more of the supply chain was developed here instead of in other countries.

As we move forward the new Government should be smart and flexible. They should set realistic targets to stop using our own oil and gas resources too quickly. Instead, we should focus on creating jobs in the UK as we work towards the 2050 goal. It is vitally important that we get this right. We need a government with a successful energy policy to help us all. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brendan. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition? (*No response*) No. Thank you. I will now call David Flanagan to give the CEC reply.

DAVID FLANAGAN (CEC): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC to Motion 221. The CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification. We note that the Committee on Climate Change has not denied the reports which the motion raises, which were first made on 20<sup>th</sup> January, '24. As the motion states, GMB policy on offshore and gas was carried at Congress 2023. The motions call for investment in substantial hydrogen reserves alongside natural gas storage, which is a welcome addition to that of existing policy. The scope of Labour's 2030 target has been adapted already, including a response to GMB representations. Our qualification is that we should wait to see the final general election manifesto wording. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support this motion with the qualification outlined.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting Motions 218 and 219. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 221? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour of Motion 218, please show? Any against? That is carried.

All those in favour of Motion 219, please show? Any against? That's carried. And all those in favour of Motion 221, please show? Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 218 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 219 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 221 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, we have a number of transport motions now. Could the mover of Composite 14 please come to the rostrum and the mover of Motion 237.

## **SOCIAL POLICY: TRANSPORT**

### **COMPOSITE 14**

#### **BUS DRIVER FATIGUE**

*Covering Motions:*

*235: BUS COMPANIES LIE WHEN RECRUITING DRIVERS (London Region)*

*236: BUS DRIVER FATIGUE (London)*

#### **BUS DRIVER FATIGUE**

This Congress demands that this Government intercede to stop the exploitation of bus drivers, right across the country, through long hours and dangerous shift patterns.

Working thirteen days in fourteen is unacceptable in this day and age. Long shifts and bad sleep patterns have a detrimental effect on the health of Bus Drivers. Better pay aligned with longer time off between shifts would be beneficial to all.

We demand that our GMB backed MPs, Councillors and Assembly members put pressure on this Government to stop the draconian domestic driver rules, which allow bus drivers just 10hrs and sometimes 8.5hrs rest between shifts.

This Congress demands action from its MPs, Councillors and Assembly Members, to stop Bus Operating Companies from lying, while recruiting new drivers, stating that they don't let drivers work seven days a week. These Companies start their week on a Saturday, Two days one week and five days the next.

We demand action for our drivers old and new and call on the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to create a code of practice ensuring that all companies keep transparent employee attendance records which are open to scrutiny and are accessible with the possibility of sanction where these procedures are not followed.

Moving region: London

Seconding region: London

*(Carried)*

MIKE TINNION (London): Good morning, Congress, I am moving Composite 14 on bus driver fatigue. Can we say that bus companies lie in their recruitment practices? No, we can't, but they do play fast and loose with the truth. When a bus company tells its potential drivers that they won't drive seven days a week, they are telling the truth, more or less. However, what they don't say is that all bus companies in the UK start their week on a Saturday, so you will do two days one week and five days the next, working seven days in total. They can have you driving 13 days in every 14, and that's legal, with only a 24-hour period off. That's not a day off. That's a 24-hour period. So they can have you finish work at 3 pm on the Monday and have you back to work at 3.05 on the Tuesday, giving you a rest of just over 24 hours.

Driver fatigue in the bus industry is at an epidemic proportion. The shortage of bus drivers right across the country is putting a huge physical strain on drivers who cannot



achieve a work-life balance. Just last week a driver in London missed his turning and crashed his bus into the taxi rank entrance at Paddington Station. I don't know why that happened but I can guess that driver fatigue had some bearing on the mistake. So we must demand that our bus drivers have better pay and shorter hours, because better pay and shorter hours means more bus drivers. Lorry drivers earn a lot more than bus drivers, but drivers carry a more important cargo: our children! We must make our GMB London Assembly Members, our councillors and our MPs put pressure on our local authorities and bus companies to change these dangerous working practices so any new laws must provide protection for our bus drivers and our children. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Secunder?

DAKSHA PAREKH (London): Congress, I am a second-time delegate and second-time speaker, seconding Composite 14. We need to change the culture around self-reporting and make sure that bus driver fatigue is taken seriously to protect both our drivers and the public. As members of the public are encouraged to use public transport, something needs to be done urgently. London Region will be speaking to the London Assembly Transport Committee on this point. However, this committee met in March and agreed that more work must be done to protect bus drivers from fatigue. There is a lot of evidence gained over many years showing that this is a chronic and widespread issue. In 2019 one in six London bus drivers reported falling asleep at the wheel due to insufficient sleep before changing shift patterns. There are also pressures on bus drivers to meet timetables, which adds stress and potentially increases the risk of collisions.

We know that the Mayor London has said there are targets for nobody to be killed on or by a London bus by 2030, but that is only six years into the future. Let's work to make sure that driver fatigue is minimised and give them adequate rest breaks. So I ask Congress to please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Daksha. I call the mover of Motion 237.

**MORE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT JOINING RURAL VILLAGES TO LOCAL TOWNS  
MOTION 237**

**237. MORE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT JOINING RURAL VILLAGES TO LOCAL TOWNS**  
This Congress recognises the need to retain bus routes from villages to towns to keep pensioners and those with a disability connected with their local towns.

Cutbacks to funding for public transport means that those people who travel to work, pensioners who travel for shopping and to pay bills as well as meeting friends and family are being isolated and facing reduced services or service cuts. Also, bus companies are faced with reduced or funding cuts forcing them to cut pay to their staff.

We need more funding for public transport services such as these vital lifelines to encourage more people to use these services,

Investing in local bus and rail networks would help people to ditch their cars and help the environment.

We need a reliable clean service that serves the public with buses and trains running on time and that run through to the late evening so people can return to their homes without the hassle and bustle of traffic jams and finding parking spaces delaying their appointments and work commitments.

We call on GMB to work with transport Unions and lobby the Government to retain these vital services.

## **B22 BRAINTREE & BOCKING BRANCH**

### **London Region**

*(Carried)*

ADRIAN STOHR (London): Congress, I am moving Motion 237 on funding for rural public transport. Since 2022 and 2023 and continuing into 2024 cuts to bus routes on villages, towns and cities have been happening. This is isolating rural communities, preventing them from easily being able to shop for their essential items or being unable to walk into their local bank for advice.

The traffic commissioners of Great Britain, who are responsible for the licensing and regulating bus services, have seen registrations go down from 10,941 in 2022 and 8,781 in 2023, a reduction of 2,160. That is 2,160 bus drivers less and more of the same is to come due cuts to funding by this Government. The public are sold out. However, they have to get to work, they have hospital appointments and such like. If they don't have a reliable public transport system available, as many cannot afford a car, they may wish to use a greener form of transport. Pensioners are unable to use their bus services which enable them to be more engaged with society, thus greatly benefiting their mental health.

It is ironic that we still pay our taxes that supposedly fund these services, and yet it is these services that many do not see. These figures do not include London as services are regulated within the London Boroughs, but what about the rest of the country? What about the vulnerable disabled people, pensioners and young mothers with children who rely on these services?

Transport budgets tend to be targeted at cities, leaving rural towns and areas in danger of becoming isolated. In January of this year *The Guardian* reported that one-in-10 bus services were axed Great Britain in the last year. This is despite Government promises of improving local transport connectivity, this being a key pillar of its levelling-up agenda. That is what our Government has come to. More empty promises, letting down the local communities by them being shut off from friends, families and necessary appointments as well as other essentials.

We need to push for funding for these much needed services connecting the country together. Remember, too, that a 53-seater bus may mean as much as 20 to 50 cars less on the roads at a time. So with over two thousand cuts, this would mean more cars on the roads. More public transport services in operation could mean less delivery vans on

the road as people would be spending more money at the local shops, whether they are in towns, cities or local village high streets. Please support this motion to enable rural villages to be connected with local towns and cities. Again, let's send a message to this Government which demands funding and investment in our public transport services. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Adrian. Secunder?

TRUDI TEW (London): Congress, I am from the Bed County Branch in London Region. Thanks, Adrian. He has given you lots of stats and statistics. Well, I grew up in a village. There were two buses a week out of my Bedfordshire village and they went to Luton but they didn't come back. All those years ago, I could smile sweetly and it was probably safe and I could get a lift from someone, but I don't think that is going to work now, not with my crutch and everything. People will leave villages if they don't have transport to get them into the towns and all the things that they need. Then the Tories will build on them, given half a chance, and those lifestyle choices for people to choose to live in a village and the areas of historical interest will be lost. You may think that this motion doesn't affect you, but if villagers are forced to use cars then you will notice the traffic, the pollution and the increase on your services. Please think about this carefully and support this motion. I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Trudi. Does anyone wish to speak against? *(No response)* No. Then I will call Shailesh Gaglani to give the CEC report.

SHAILESH GAGLANI (CEC): Congress, I am responding on behalf of the CEC to Composite 14, which we are supporting with a qualification.

Bus driver fatigue is a serious matter and there should be no misrepresentation in any recruitment issues, let alone in a safety-critical industry. Our qualification is that the branch has clarified that most of this is based on personal experiences some years previously. Further information is required to establish the prevalence of the problem and whether the practices described in the motion are correct. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Composite 14 with the qualification set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Shailesh. Does London accept the qualification to Composite 14? *(Agreed)* Thank you. All those in favour, please show? Any against? That is carried. The CEC is supporting Motion 237. All those in favour, please show? Any against? That is carried.

*Composite 14 was CARRIED.  
Motion 237 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could the mover of Motion 233 come to the rostrum.

## **SAFER PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS MOTION 233**

### **233. SAFER PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS**

This Congress notes that changes to the layout of any city centre, with the introduction of “cycle lanes” has had a negative impact on disabled people.

These changes to the pedestrian's walkways are dangerous for the blind and disabled people.

To make room for the cycles, there is now a cycle path at the bus stop, where getting of the bus you could be knocked down by a cycle.

The cycle lane is in the middle of the pedestrian walkway, so if you are blind or disabled and not as quick on your feet you can find that you have been knocked down, now there is no insurance claim for you because the cyclist does not need any.

### **We call on congress:**

To campaign for a review of the layout of the cycle paths in the city centres for the safe travel of our disabled and blind public.

To work and campaign with their community to help change and enforce legislation to those that do not follow the rules of the road.

### **G87 – GLASGOW HEALTH SERVICE (APEX) GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

TERESA WILL (GMB Scotland): Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Vice President and delegates, in 2022 462 pedestrians were injured by cyclists compared to 437 injured in 2021 and one person is recorded to have died. There is a rise in the number of accidents year on year involving cyclists and pedestrians. Law currently exists that reference cyclists, pavements and pedestrians, which is section 72 of the Highways Act 1835 which forbids carriages of any description from riding on any footpath or by the side of any road made apart from their use or accommodating foot passengers. In 1988 bicycles were classified as carriages, meaning that they were then stopped from ridden on footpaths or roads designed for pedestrians. The legal interpretation is generally that pavements are considered pedestrian footpaths meaning that cyclists should not ride on the pavements. Also e-scooters are not allowed to be ridden on pavements in the UK. Dangerous, careless and inconsiderate cycling is legislated for and governed by sections 28 and 29 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The Highway Code also states in rule 64 that you must not cycle on a pavement. It also advises that cyclists take care when passing pedestrians, especially children, older or disabled people and allow them plenty of room.

But Congress notes that there have been changes to the layout of city centres in recent times, most notably during and after the Covid pandemic. This has most notably been observed with the introduction of cycle lanes at bus stops and shared pavements. These changes were introduced with the aim of encouraging cycling particularly within city centres with the introduction of the low emission zones.

Another notable change to the city centre has been a marked increase in the number of delivery drivers utilising pedestrian areas rather than roadways. These delivery drivers are more often than not using battery-powered electric bikes which generally have a higher speed than the more traditional pedal cycles and, therefore, the risk to pedestrians remains. A quick look on social media would show low standards of safe cycling displayed by cyclists with numerous recorded near misses involving cyclists and pedestrians at a clearly marked pedestrian crossing, and a majority of cyclists failing to adhere to traffic signals or clearly marked crossings. We call on Congress to campaign for a review of the layout of cycle paths in our city centres for the safe travel of our blind, disabled and elderly public. I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Teresa. Secunder?

MARGARET BOARD (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am seconding Motion 233. This Congress notes that changes to the layout of any city centre, with the introduction of 'cycle lanes' has had a negative impact on disabled and elderly people. Many changes to the pedestrian's walkways are dangerous. The construction of cycle lanes in city centres and in the middle of walkways are running adjacent to bus stops and bus lanes, which means that people alighting from a bus are stepping onto the cycle lanes and can be injured by a bicycle. Cyclists do not have the right to use public footpaths and it is an offence to cycle on footpaths. Taken together this means that cyclists can currently use approximately a quarter of all rights of way in England and about a fifth in Wales.

Although cyclists share the same rights as other road users, cyclists also share a duty of care to other vehicles and pedestrians. Cyclists are not required to have insurance like motorists, but if a pedestrian is injured caused by a cyclist you can initiate a personal injury claim against the cyclist in this case, which would obviously be a cost.

A 2011 DfT document lists the public places which need not be included in the stats 2019 data – February '24. Also a cyclist running a red light in city and town centres where there are traffic lights are also crossings for pedestrians. According to the Highway Code, informed by the Road Traffic Act 1988, section 36: "Cyclists must obey all traffic signs and must not cross the stop line when traffic lights are red. January '23".

We call on Congress for a review of the layout of the cycle lanes in the city and town centres for the safe travel of the public, to work and campaign with city councils and communities to help change and enforce legislation to those who do not follow the rules of the road. Thank you, Congress. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. I call Motion 234.

## **CYCLING SAFETY MOTION 234**

### **234. CYCLING SAFETY**

This Congress is concerned for the safety of cyclists across the country.

We therefore demand with the help of our GMB Assembly Members, Councillors and MPs that:

- ALL cycle lanes should be made mandatory, for rider protection.
- All cyclists should be insured, for riders' peace of mind.
- ALL cyclists must wear a helmet, and an identifiable High Visibility clothing, for their safety.
- All cycles should have front and back solid beam light (not flashing) for their all-round protection.
- All bicycles should be registered, and a number plate attached, for the prevention of theft.

### **G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH London Region**

*(Lost)*

GARY RUSSELL (London): Congress, I am a GMB representative for the London Region. I'm a first-time delegate and speaker at Congress. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 234: Cycling Safety. Cycling is an economical, eco-friendly and health conscious mode of transportation. As such, it has been a favourite pastime and lifestyle choice. The increasing number of cyclists on UK roads may result in cycling accidents. Ramsden Solicitors have provided an in-depth look into the prevalence and consequences of these accidents in a bid to underscore the pressing need for robust safety measures.

The statistics associated with cycling accidents are critical in highlighting the extent and gravity of the issues with pedal cycle safety. Understanding the data allows us an insight to the effects in developing road safety infrastructure and shaping suitable laws that protect cyclists.

Policymakers should, likewise, utilise these figures as first-hand evidence in their pursuit of better infrastructure and more rigorous safety regulations. Despite the dramatic increase in cyclists on the UK roads in the periods assessed between 2004 and 2021, the number of cycling accidents has not necessarily increased. In 2004 there were over 16,600 accidents involving pedal cyclists, and 16,458 in 2021 despite there being two times more cyclists reported. Additionally, pedal cycle fatalities decreased by 17%. This may be due to improved protection equipment such as helmets or better educational initiatives amongst communities and what to do in the event of a cycling accident.

Although the number of casualties did not increase in line with the number of cyclists, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Between 2004 and 2021, serious injuries

were reported to have increased by 27%, and although they did not result in death they still may have had significant consequences on the individuals' lives. Cycling accident occur owing to any array of factors. At the top of the table between 2016 and 2021, 80,000 cycle accidents were reported where one car was involved. Such accidents are often caused by negligent driving or failing to acknowledge cyclists' rights on the roads and other contributing factors include poor road conditions, leading to dangerous falls and accidents at the workplace involving cycling duties.

Prevention is an essential approach when it comes to cycling safety, but the primary cause of such accidents is due to negligent driving. To minimise the risk of being injured in an accident you should always wear a helmet and reflective clothing, display lights in low-light conditions and make sure you signal to other road users. However, whatever prevention measures are put in place, an accident can still occur. I implore Congress to get behind this motion to improve cycle safety and hope that no-one has to go through a loss. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Secunder?

STEPHEN CLARE (London): Congress, I am seconding Motion 234. In 2023 there were 7.4 million people who cycle on the roads for sport, leisure and travel in England. With many towns and cities adopting e-bikes now, this figure must have risen significantly. We need help from councillors and MPs to make cycling on our roads safer with cycle lanes made mandatory for all riders.

As a person who cycles a lot for fun with my daughter and, dare I say it, for exercise, but as you can see not that often, I think it should be made compulsory to wear cycle helmets and high-visibility clothing when cycling on Britain's roads. I also think that the police should be allowed to be more proactive in encouraging cycling safety and ensure that cyclists have working front and rear lights.

Congress, the challenge is to protect these millions of cyclists on our roads because some of these people will be our children in the future on these dangerous roads. Please vote for Motion 234. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Does anyone want to speak in opposition?

CHRISTIAN SANTABARBARA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I object to Motion 234. Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time opposer and extremely nervous. *(Applause)* I believe that this motion does not seek to make cycling safer. This motion appears to reinforce harmful cycle stereotypes and leave cycles with additional costs and regulations that make cycling left safe in an already critically vulnerable mode of transport.

Just to be clear, we are the most vulnerable vehicle road user, and I am a key worker. The first element of the motion mandates cycle lane usage. This is good in theory, but forcing cyclists into cycle lane usage not only removes my ability to offensively cycle in dangerous situations but also people park in cycle lanes. This enforcement and

restriction has not been thought through. Will I be fined for cycling safely in the centre or a road near a middle-aisle bollard as a driver attempts to dangerously overtake me?

In the second instance, mandating an unspecified insurance regime for cyclists is inappropriate. It adds additional costs to being a cycle courier but it also makes leisure cycling and commuter cycling increasingly accessible to many. In a cost-of-living crisis that is a bad idea.

In the third instance, on helmets, I agree completely and absolutely. These save people's lives. But mandatory high-visibility clothing is not even a requirement for motor cycles that travel at 50 miles-an-hour plus, never mind a pedal cycle limited to 30 miles-an-hour and a legal e-bike limited to 15 miles-per-hour. Who do we, as a union, expect to cover the cost? Again, this ups the cost of cycling for everybody.

In the fourth instance, the law states that only bicycles have lights. Solid beams on bicycles can be dangerous for on-coming drivers if not properly regulated. I've been threatened by drivers historically for having solid-beam lights, and this makes a further danger in an already hostile environment. Imagine blinding a driver driving towards a cyclist on a narrow road in the dark. This is not a safe policy for us to adopt.

Lastly, it says that all bicycles should be registered and licensed. Frankly, this is dumbfounding! Licence plates do not prevent theft and neither does registration. My bike has been marked by my local police department and is registered, but this will not stop a theft and a licence plate can be removed and the bike resold. Congress, how would this be policed, how would it be enforced and who pays the price for retrofitting licence plates? How do we avoid instances where couriers are targeted further by local police forces, as is the case already in York? I fear this motion moves to making cycling increasingly expensive and convoluted, thereby decreasing its attraction as a cheaper green mode of transport. In a world where we need to decarbonise, putting up barriers to cycling as thinly-veiled safety precautions is not the right thing to do.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Christian, wind-up, please.

CHRISTIAN SANTABARBARA: Cycling restructures should be welcomed now and supported everywhere. Safety should be logical and consented.

Finally, think about this, Congress. Every day at work I attempt to recruit cyclists. This motion is not asking me to mandate. Please do not vote this way. It is expensive, unsafe and illogical and it is a motion by drivers against cycling. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Motion 234, right to reply. *(No response)* No. Then I call Donna Spicer to speak on behalf of the CEC.

DONNA SPICER (CEC): Well, that blows what I am going to say out of the water, doesn't it? *(Laughter)* Thank you very much, Christian.



Vice President and Congress, I am responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 233 and 234, which the CEC is supporting with qualifications. On Motion 233 the CEC recognises that serious safety concerns have been raised by people who are blind or of limited mobility about the design of some cycle-lane schemes. I got knocked over by a bike when I was getting off a bus once, and it bloomin' well hurt.

Our qualification is that we are not against cycle lanes on principle and that further investment is needed in cycling infrastructure that is built to accessible design standards.

On Motion 234 the CEC can support some of the measures proposed, such as low intensity cycling registration schemes, which have been effective in Denmark and Japan. We support investment in cycling safety, including segregated infrastructure where this is practicable. However, we should not support measures that reduce overall numbers of cyclists as mandatory helmet-wearing has been proved wherever in the world it has been implemented. It is also not practical for all cyclists to be forced to wear particular clothing or to be insured. You should be happy about that, Christian, hopefully. Other measures should only be supported where there is clear international evidence that they do not reduce the number of people cycling. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 233 and 234 with the qualifications set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Donna. Does GMB Scotland accept the qualification on Motion 233? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 234? *(Agreed)* All those in favour of Motion 233, please show? Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 233 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Could all those in favour of Motion 234 please show? Any against? Let's just take the vote once more. All those in favour, please show? All those against? Tellers to the floor. *(Cheers and applause)*

Congress, the show of hands was very close. I am now calling for the tellers' vote on Motion 234. We will follow the procedure in Congress Guidelines set out in the Final Agenda. You are reminded that only elected or appointed lay delegates seated in the Congress Hall can vote. Please listen carefully. Could the stewards, please, close the doors. Delegates, please remain in your seats until all votes have been cast. Do I have the tellers in the hall? Could tellers go to the GMB desk and collect your voting sheets. London Region – Tony Cholerton counts Southern; Midlands – Annette Greenwood counts Wales & South West; North East, Yorkshire & Humber – Les Timbey counts London; North West & Irish – Kay Doherty counts Midlands; GMB Scotland – Robert Graham counts North East, Yorkshire & Humber; Southern - Rachel Webber counts North West & Irish; and GMB Wales & South West – Rebecca Jones counts GMB Scotland. Are all the tellers in their places and ready? *(Agreed)* Could the General Member Auditor be ready, please?

I will now repeat the call for the vote on Motion 234. All those in favour of Motion 234, please show? Put your hands up. This is not a card vote. The tellers are in their places. Delegates, keep your hands up until I say differently. *(Pause)* I am sorry to say, colleagues, that all the tellers are not in their places. The thing is that they are not supposed to leave the hall. We are just waiting to make sure that they are all in the hall. Thank you, colleagues. I understand that all the tellers are in the hall now. They are in their positions. What will happen now is that there will be a show of hands, they will count all the hands and report back for them to be counted. So all those in favour of Motion 234 please show? All tellers back in position, please. All those against, please show? *(Pause)* I think all the votes have been counted now.

Could the speakers of Motions 238, 242 and 243 come to the front, please. Colleagues, we will continue with Congress business until the votes have been counted. Could the mover of Motion 238 come to the rostrum, please?

### **IS IT TIME TO MOVE AWAY FROM TFL MOTION 238**

#### **238. IS IT TIME TO MOVE AWAY FROM TFL**

This Congress understands that TfL's (Transport for London) business model directly conflicts with its regulatory and licencing powers.

Taxi & Private Hire drivers are direct in competition to TfL's Bus and Train policies, therefore a move away to an independent regulator should sort this out.

### **G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH London Region**

*(Referred)*

MIKE TINNION (London): Congress, I move Motion 238: Is it Time to Move Away from TFL? Taxi and private hire drivers in London are done! They are sick of being second class citizens to London's profit-making arm: buses and Tube trains. TFL's own business model directly conflicts with its regulatory and licensing powers, and taxi and private hire drivers will never get a level playing field while it competes with buses and Tube trains for market share.

Never does a bus stop have lorries parked on it because it is convenient to the local stores. Never are bus stops closed by scaffold or construction vans that can park with TFL's permission. Taxi ranks are used for these purposes and more. Only a move away from TFL and their Draconian and blinkered view on licensing can the taxi and private hire trade flourish. An independent body, hopefully not party political, should be sought out, a regulator which is non-profit making and a regulator that listens. As we all know, good listeners make good leaders.

The CEC has asked for this motion to be referred. Let's hope this referral can take place and that this issue can move forward. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Secunder? *(Formally seconded)* I call Motion 242.

**INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS  
MOTION 242**

**242. INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS**

This Congress demands that All Local Authorities & Licencing Authorities to have a complaints process for Taxi & Private Hire drivers that is independent from Licencing Authority.

**G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH  
London Region**

*(Referred)*

DAVID MUNYEMWERI (London): Vice President, I'm a first-time delegate and second-time speaker. Taxi and private hire drivers exist at the discretion of the local authority officers, with all the bias that comes with the role. We, as a trade union, must protect our driver members by insisting that all complaints, both licensing and medical, must be heard by an outside agency, independent of the licensing authority. Although the CEC says that this motion relates to London and Southern Region, this is a national issue.

There are 350,000 licensed taxi and private drivers within the UK, and although we recruit heavily, especially in London, we are only scratching the surface as this is a national issue. Lifting our game in the taxi and private hire sectors would create huge benefits for our union. So with the help of our own GMB London Assembly members, councillors and MPs, we must look at the levelling of the playing fields by conducting a complaints procedure for our drivers that is independent from the local authority licence officers. We are happy for this to be referred so that we can build up examples of cases. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Secunder? *(Formally seconded from the floor)* I call Motion 243.

**WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS?  
MOTION 243**

**243. WHO MAKES THE DECISIONS?**

This Congress demands that Local Authorities are open and transparent when making decisions on suspending or revoking our GMB Union Professional Driver members licence on medical grounds.

We demand that any individual with delegated or other powers must be able to prove that the medical advice is from a qualified medical practitioner and in the case of delegated powers, the officer must follow a specific set of policy and procedures detailing the reasoning and decision-making process behind all decisions taken.

**G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH**

## London Region

*(Referred)*

STEPHEN STRATTON (London): Congress, I move Motion 243. Professional driving is a privilege that comes with a great deal of responsibility. Local authorities also have a responsibility of regulating and overseeing the professional driving industry to ensure the safety of both drivers and passengers as well as other road users. This includes monitoring and regulating who is fit to drive. They have the power to revoke or suspend the professional driving licence, and revoking a professional driving licence has a serious consequence for the driver involved as it can have a significant impact on their life and ability to earn a living.

Is it right, then, that a professional driver can have his, her, their licence revoked on medical grounds when the decision is made by someone other than a medical professional? We are saying no, it's not. We need to ensure that these decisions are grounded in sound medical evidence. Local authorities appear to have the power to stop people earning an honest living using the art of delegation. They may delegate to an officer of their choosing the power to tell our member, the professional driver of many years' good standing, that their licence is being suspended or revoked on medical grounds. "Medical grounds" is quite a generic term. It covers many things, some of which might not be a reason to revoke or suspend a licence but only someone who practises medical would know.

So where is the proof that the decision is being taken on the advice of a medical practitioner? There should be more openness and transparency when these decisions are taken, and proof that the decision to revoke or suspend has been made on the advice of a medical practitioner who is qualified to give that advice.

In conclusion, this motion demands that local authorities are open and transparent when making decisions to revoke or suspend GMB members' professional licences on medical grounds, and any delegate officer proves that the advice to revoke or suspend is from a qualified medical practitioner and that they have strictly followed policy and procedure detailing the reasoning behind the decision. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. Seconder?

ELIZABETH HUGHES (London): Vice President, I am seconding Motion 243. Congress, as my colleague has said, there are approximately 57,000 licensed taxi drivers in England and approximately 232,000 private hire vehicles which are currently live in England. These professional drivers are licensed by local authorities who are, in turn, legislated through the Local Government Act 1976, the Regulations Code of 2014 and the good old Town & Police Clause Act of 1847. That is a lot of legislation. But the Regulations Code specifically lays down core principles on how the process of licensing and of all delegated decision-making in local government should be undertaken. The process of licensing must encompass fairness, integrity, openness, offer value and

deliver a service that is both helpful and responsive. However, most importantly in local government all decisions must be transparent, intelligence led and risk based.

Congress, as we heard yesterday, our members in the professional driving industry are pushing back against some of the less transparent and less helpful processes and practices imposed by licensing bodies.

This motion follows in that, currently, not all licensing bodies are diligent in making medical-caused licence suspensions and revocations dependent on reports from medical professionals. In effect, this means that a professional driver can lose their licence on medical grounds without the right to ask for an independent review of their case, and their only recourse is to take their case their case to appeal at the local magistrates' court. We are talking about a group of workers in England numbering in excess of 300,000 people who can lose their jobs on medical grounds. I second this motion to end this inequity. I ask you all to support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, I now have the result of Motion 234. For the motion: 112. Against the motion: 170. *(Cheers and applause)* That motion is lost by 58 votes.

*Motion 234 was LOST.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call Gordon Gibbs to respond on behalf of the CEC to Motions 238, 242 and 243.

GORDON GIBBS (CEC): Motions 238 and 242 relate to transport within London. We are asking that these be referred so that both London and Southern Regions can express a view on the merits of the potential consequences of the proposal. Our national local authority lay structures may also wish to take a view as the precedent set in London may have consequences for employment arrangements in other parts of the country.

The motion also needs to be considered in context of GMB's long-standing support for integrated transport policies.

The CEC is also asking for Motion 243 to be referred so that a view on its cause can also be taken by our Local Government National Committee. GMB represents local authority workers who would be affected by this motion. Therefore, the CEC is asking for Motions 238, 242 and 243 to be referred. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gordon. Does London agree to refer Motion 238? *(Agreed)* Does London agree to refer Motion 242? *(Agreed)* Does London also agree to refer Motion 243? *(Agreed)* Colleagues, they have all been referred so there is no need to take the vote.

*Motion 238 was REFERRED.*

*Motion 242 was REFERRED.*

*Motion 243 was REFERRED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, you will all be pleased to note that that is the end of the morning session. Enjoy your lunch and be back for 2 o'clock.

*Conference adjourned for lunch.*

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

*(Congress assembled at 2.00 p.m.)*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I ask delegates to take their seats, please? Thank you. Can I call Congress to order, please? Just before I introduce Standing Orders Committee, Karen, I have two announcements, one from the Yorkshire Disabled Workers Co-Operative, they want to thank all GMB regions and our members for the great support over the last year and want to invite you to their stall, buy a bird box and they will donate £1 to help the children of Gaza.

The other is a plug for this lovely book, *Uprising*, it is a GMB Union experience of race and class, written by John Callow. It is a beautiful book and if you go to the Bookmarks stall you can buy a copy, and all the proceeds will go back into race initiatives and the GRASP programme so it is coming back into the union. Please buy your copies of that as well.

I understand the SOC have another report so, Karen to move SOC Report No.4.

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

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress, Composite Motions – the SOC would like to thank Wales & South West Region for agreeing a further composite motion covering Motions 170 and 171. This is Composite Motion 19, Protect Police Community Support Officers Staff Role. A copy will be distributed to delegates.

Emergency Motions – the SOC has accepted a further Emergency Motion and this is Emergency Motion 2, No More Pilgrims Food Masters Losses standing in the name of London Region, the time and day for the Emergency to be heard will be advised.

President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No.4.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. I do not imagine there is anybody who wants to come up in opposition for that? No? In that case we will take that report to the vote, please, SOC Report No.4. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Standing Orders Committee Report No.4 was CARRIED.*

## **REGIONAL VIDEO – LONDON AND SOUTHERN**

THE PRESIDENT: We will now play the regional campaign video for both London Region and Southern Region.

*Videos played to Congress.*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, London Region and Southern Region. I just think the videos keep getting better and better, all the member-led campaigns, disputes, and also the victories as well. Well done.

## **ELEANOR MARX AWARD**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to the presentation of the Eleanor Marx Award. 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 rule book. At each Congress we dedicate the Eleanor Marx Award to outstanding women activists and I am delighted to say that this year we have two winners, Ceferina Floresca from our Amazon Branch in the Midlands and Rachel Webber from the ASDA A10 Branch in Southern Region. Ceferina and Rachel, if you would like to come up here.

*(Presentation amid applause)*

CEFERINA FLORESCA: Good afternoon. I am deeply honoured and humbled to receive the Eleanor Marx Award this year. This recognition holds a special place in my heart mostly because of the history associated with it but because of what it represents. Eleanor Marx dedicated her life to fighting for the voiceless and oppressed and to be associated with her legacy is both inspiring and humbling. First and foremost I would like to thank the GMB for this incredible honour. With unwavering commitment to the rights and welfare of workers, it is a beacon of hope in this challenging time. This award is not just appreciation of individual efforts but a testament to the collective strength and resilience of our communities. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the GMB, BSS Leader's team, who worked tirelessly alongside me; your dedication and passion made all the difference. This award is as much yours as it is mine. In accepting this award I am reminded of the ongoing struggles that workers face every day from fair wages and safe working conditions to the right to unionise in the fight against discrimination. Our reward is twice over. We must remain vigilant and steadfast in our efforts. Let us continue to advocate for equality that protects workers. Let us fight against injustices that undermine the dignity of labour and let us see a future where every worker is treated with respect and dignity. Once again I thank you for this incredible honour. Thank you. *(Standing ovation)*

*(Presentation amid applause)*

RACHEL WEBBER (Southern): President, Congress, thank you. Wow! How do I follow that? If you had told me two years ago that I would be up on stage giving a speech at Congress I would have laughed, let alone two days in a row. That is so not me, definitely

not. I am truly shocked and honoured to have been selected for this award and to be given such an accolade. In fact, when I received the email informing me I believe I emailed back in disbelief and suggested that perhaps someone else was more deserving. Even with the lovely things that have been said about me it is truly humbling and thank you, Michelle Gordon, for your kind words and all your support. I have been so fortunate in my short journey as a GMB rep that I have had the amazing Southern team to support, train, and guide me from the very beginning. (*Applause*) From my very first meeting with my officer, Nicola Nixon, who saw something in me that I could not see within myself and with the support of my branch, the trainers, the reps, and of course my members, I have grown in confidence and determination to continue to fight for better working conditions and to empower others to have a voice. My journey as a GMB rep has been a real adventure and it has certainly not been without its challenges and a few wobbles. I am someone who is not always the strongest person to speak up for myself but this is not just about me, it is about our members and my colleagues, and I would do anything for them. I suppose I should thank my employer ASDA because without their poor conditions my colleagues have endured - (*Applause*) – I would never have found the courage to stand up not just for myself but for my members too. Someone said to me, “You’re really brave,” and I had to chuckle because that is not how I would describe myself. A wise woman once said to me, “Be brave and if not pretend to be, no one else will know the difference.” With the GMB by my side my bravery grows every day. I think as women we do not realise when we inspire people. We see something that needs to be done and we just do it. Thank you for this amazing honour. I will leave you with this thought: when women support and guide each other we naturally inspire and empower. Thank you. (*Standing ovation*)

### **MARY MACARTHUR HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD**

THE PRESIDENT: Well done both of you. Worthy winners. Now we move on to the presentation of another award, the Mary MacArthur Health & Safety Rep of the Year Award. This award is named after Mary MacArthur, founder of the National Federation of Women Workers, which became part of what is now GMB and proud suffragettes who fought sweatshop labour. I am so pleased to announce that the award this year is to Martina Vrajitoru, who you heard speak so well on the campaigns at Hinckley Point C this morning.

*(Presentation amid applause)*

MARTINA VRAJITORU: I will say thank you after the amazing speeches you heard before. Thank you very much for all the support and thank you for this. I really appreciate it. (*Standing ovation*)

### **JOHN McCLEAN HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARD**

THE PRESIDENT: Lastly, our final award is the John McClean Award, named after our former National Health & Safety Officer, who still remains dearly missed. The winning branch of this award is the RCN@GMB X10 Branch from London Region, and Tony Durcan is accepting the award on behalf of the branch. The RCN branch is a national



branch, and the award has been given for the textbook approach to organising around health and safety, particularly since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic.

*(Presentation amid applause)*

TONY DURCAN (London): Good afternoon, again. On behalf of the RCN branch thank you very much for this prestigious piece of – I do not know if it is plastic or glass but it is nice to receive something every now and again. Health & Safety has to be at the heart of everything that we do as trade unionists because if we cannot come to work safely and feel safe and secure what is the point? Equally, because of Covid, it has reminded us of the necessity for care and compassion for dealing with all members of staff. I know it is ironic but a trade union is receiving an award from a trade union but it does not matter where you work, or what you do, your lives are important and actually we work better together. So, on behalf of everybody, thank you, especially all my mates up in the London Region. Have a great afternoon. Thanks for your time. *(Standing ovation)*

## **RULE AMENDMENT – CECRA1**

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, again, to all those winners. We now move on to the CEC Rule Amendment 1, which will be moved by Malcolm.

## **GMB CONGRESS 2024**

### **CEC RULE AMENDMENT TO CONGRESS 2024 - RULE A3**

#### **CECRA1**

#### **Current Rule A3**

#### **Rule A3 Section national conferences**

1 We will hold a national conference for the members of each section every year. The conferences will report to and advise the Central Executive Council and the union negotiators, and all decisions of the conferences must be approved by the Central Executive Council and Congress. The conferences must not consider any matter Congress is responsible for. The Central Executive Council and Congress may, from time to time, issue guidelines on what matters the conferences can consider.

2 Section national conferences will be held every year at a time and location approved by the Central Executive Council. There will be one regional delegate for every 1,500 financial members of the section in each region. Regions shall take steps to ensure the regional delegation properly reflects the balance of the regional section membership in respect of industry, geographic spread, ethnicity, gender, disability, youth and sexual orientation. Delegates will hold office for one year.

3 A section national president will be elected in 2008 and at every fourth Section Conference from then on, from among the members of the Section Conference elected in line with rule A3.2 for that year, and from the members of the Section National Committee. The section president will hold office for four years, chair the Section Conference after that at which they are elected and be eligible to be nominated and re-elected after their four-year term of office. In the event an election is required to fill a casual vacancy at an intervening Section Conference the section national president then elected will serve the balance of the period of office until the next election is due in line with this rule. During their term of office the section president will chair all meetings of the Section National Committee.

**Proposed Amendment:**

**Rule heading delete “National”. Delete clauses 1, 2 , 3; Insert new clauses 1 and 2.**

**Rule to read:**

**Rule A3 Section conferences**

1 We will hold sector, industry or employer specific conferences for members as required from time to time and as determined by the Section National Committee. The conferences will report to and advise the Section National Committee and the Union negotiators, and all decisions of the conferences must be approved by the Section National Committee. The conferences must not consider any matter Congress is responsible for. The Central Executive Council and Congress may, from time to time, issue guidelines on what matters the conferences can consider.

2 At its first meeting following an election for the Central Executive Council held under rule 11.7, the Section National Committees will elect from their own members, a Section National President. For the Private Section only the Private Section National Committee will elect joint Section National Presidents. The joint Private Section National Presidents so elected will be gender balanced, with one elected from the former Manufacturing Section membership of the Private Section National Committee and one elected from the former Commercial Services Section membership of the Private Section National Committee. The Section National President(s) will hold office until the term of office of the Central Executive Council ends, and be eligible to be re-elected if still a member of the Section National Committee under rule A2.

The Public Section National President will chair all meetings of the Section National Committee. The joint Private Section National Presidents will chair meetings of the Section National Committee on a rotational basis. If the Public Section National President is unable to attend a meeting the Section National Committee will elect from its own members a chair for that meeting. If both joint Private Section National Presidents are unable to attend a meeting the Section National Committee will elect from its own members a chair for that meeting. In the event an election is required to fill a casual vacancy the next following meeting of the Section National Committee will elect from its own members a new Section National President who will serve the balance of the term of office.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, President. Congress, Malcolm Sage, National Vice President, moving the CEC Rule Amendment 1 to Rule A3. President, Congress, comrades, colleagues and friends, there are some motions that deal with big ideas and they are ideals that shape our great union, others that embark and enable our work are purely practical yet they are no less important as they enable our work and our union democracy. This is the case with this CEC rule amendment.

Following a decision by Congress 2023 to move from three to two industrial sections the CEC has determined through this rule amendment that instead of holding sectional conferences each year we will go to sector, industry, and employer specific conferences under the proposed amendment to rule. These changes also require a new way to elect sectional national presidents.

The proposed amendment to Rule A3.2 provides the sectional national president to be elected by and from the members of the section national committees at their first meeting following the new CEC take up of office. This process is a practical and a familiar one as it mirrors the way in which regional presidents are elected by and from members of regional councils.

Following consultation with the lay members rule book review group, in the case of the private section joint sectional national presidents will be elected by and from the private sectional national committee members. This ensures that the essential culture and industrial characteristic of the former commercial services and manufacturing sections are recognised in these elections and that these elections will be gender balanced. The joint section national presidents will then chair alternative meetings of the private section national committee.

With the new CEC taking up office on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 it is essential that Rule A3 is amended by this Congress so that meetings of section national committees scheduled for July can elect their section national presidents for their next term of office.

The CEC therefore asks Congress to adopt CEC Rule Amendment 1, amending Rules A3.1 and A3.2 as a highly practical measure that respects our distinct industrial cultures and brings the rule book into line with existing Congress decisions and which further enhances and confirms our democratic structure. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Can I have somebody of the CEC to formally second that, please? (*Formally seconded*) Thank you, Kevin. I will put that CEC Rule Amendment to the vote. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That Rule Amendment is carried. Thank you.

*CECRA1 was CARRIED*

## **CEC REPORT: EUROPE**

**GMB Congress  
Bournemouth 2024  
CEC Special Report:  
A New Deal with Europe**

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## List of acronyms

<b>CBAM</b>	<b>Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism</b>
<b>CE</b>	<b>Conformité Européenne – European conformity</b>
<b>DAG</b>	<b>Domestic Advisory Group</b>
<b>ECHR</b>	<b>European Convention on Human Rights</b>
<b>EWC</b>	<b>European Works Council</b>
<b>HSE</b>	<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organisation</b>
<b>OBR</b>	<b>Office of Budget Responsibility</b>
<b>ONS</b>	<b>Office for National Statistics</b>
<b>NSEC</b>	<b>North Seas Energy Cooperation</b>
<b>REACH</b>	<b>Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals</b>
<b>WTO</b>	<b>World Trade Organisation</b>
<b>TCA</b>	<b>Trade and Cooperation Agreement</b>
<b>UKCA</b>	<b>UK Conformity Assessed</b>

## Summary of policy adopted

This report calls for the UK to adopt, as negotiating objectives for the 2026 review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement:

### **Workers’ rights**

- A radically strengthened workers’ rights agreement between the UK and the EU, scrapping of the requirement to show a negative impact on trade and investment, and the right for unions to bring complaints.
- The UK must ensure that it does not fall behind Europe on new equalities standards.
- The TUC to work closely with the ETUC to develop a common agenda for the 2026 negotiation.
- Protect European Works Councils in the UK, and make sure UK workers regain their full rights to initiate and participate in EWCs.
- Equal representation for trade unions on UK-EU forums.
- UK membership of the Erasmus+ scheme.
- An ambitious youth mobility scheme which gives young workers the freedom to seek employment across Europe.
- A determined campaign of opposition against any attempt to take the UK out of the European Convention on Human Rights.

## Building a stronger economy

- New customs and VAT agreements to reduce economic frictions.
- Adoption of 'Swiss-style' regulatory co-operation between the UK and Europe in chemicals and other key sectors.
- Renewal of the TCA's energy co-operation clauses, a new energy trading arrangement, and restoration of the UK's membership of the North Seas Energy Cooperation group.
- The UK to bring forward its CBAM scheme if possible, and align its Emissions Trading Scheme with Europe.
- The devolved governments, parliaments, and assemblies should be offered a formal role in the negotiation and scrutiny of any new agreement with the EU.
- Restoration of regional and civil society funding to pre-Brexit levels.
- The removal of TCA clauses that bar domestic contents requirements for manufactured goods under government contracts.

## **Security**

- The UK to enter into a new defence and security agreement with the EU.
- Recognition that the shipbuilding sector is different to the other areas of defence, and Labour's pledge to award contracts with domestic shipyards must not be infringed.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Although Brexit may have dropped down the news agenda, the future of the UK's relationship with Europe is one of the most important questions that faces the country and the labour movement.

1.2 GMB has a proud history of leading on Europe. We were the first union to establish an office in Brussels, and we were proud to represent UK political workers in the European Parliament. We were also among the first to embrace the European 'social dimension,' recognising that Europe could act both as a source of economic strength and as a bulwark against the power of exploitative multinationals and antiunion governments at home.

1.3 This report is not about reopening the wounds and battles of the past. We know that strong and opposing views are held within GMB's membership, as they are in the wider country. Nor is the report about overwriting the policies – both favourable to, and critical of, the EU - that GMB Congress has carried in previous years. But our policy must also stay fit for the times we live in. The first opportunity to review our relationship with Europe is fast approaching, and GMB should be in a position to influence both the public debate and the agenda of the next government.

1.4 Politicians have not been honest about the damage that the economy has suffered since 2016. The Tories' reckless and ideological pursuit of a sharp break has inflicted enormous costs upon industry, exhausted reserves of goodwill with our largest trading partners, and, shamefully, endangered the Good Friday Agreement. Far from redirecting the cost of EU subscriptions to public services, as voters were promised, the May-Johnson-Sunak Brexit has proved a handmaiden to austerity and renewed attacks on workers' rights.<sup>1</sup>

1.5 The world has become less safe since our agreement with the EU came into force in 2021. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, energy insecurity, supply chain disruption, and volatile inflation all make renewed co-operation a political imperative.

1.6 The next government will face an early important test when the terms of that exit agreement are reviewed, and – perhaps – renegotiated. As with any negotiation, we need a position and a mandate for pursuing it. That is what this report sets out.

1.7 We must be honest about the scope of those negotiations. We respect the outcome of the referendum and there is no prospect of rejoining the EU in the next two years. Membership of the single market and a customs union are not on the table.<sup>a</sup> The review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) is, however, an important opportunity to establish a new relationship with Europe that safeguards jobs and workers' rights. Existing Labour commitments to seek new agreements on veterinary standards and mutual recognition of qualifications are welcome, but a more comprehensive agenda is needed.

1.8 That review, and – perhaps – a renegotiation of the TCA treaty is expected in 2026.<sup>b</sup> Like any negotiation, GMB will review its outcomes in the round, in line with our policies and industrial interests. But Congress 2024 represents an important opportunity to set out early negotiating priorities, which have been informed by engagement through our Private Section structure and a survey of reps in the most directly affected industries.

1.9 Eight years on from the referendum, it is clear that the Brexit agreement is causing enormous harm to our economy and our standing in the world. We need a new settlement. We need a reset relationship that removes barriers and is based on strong mutual recognition of workers' rights. This report sets out a serious and realistic set of demands. It is time for a new deal with Europe.

a And both main parties have ruled out pursuit of these aims. It remains GMB policy, however, that the UK's best future would be served through a customs union with the EU, combined with tariff-free access to the single market.

b In theory, the review could start in 2025, but it is widely expected to commence in 2026.

### Note on reps survey

*To inform this report, GMB carried out a survey of Private Section reps in May 2024. The results of the survey are reproduced throughout the report, and in more detail as an appendix.*

## **2. Background**

2.1 GMB has been clear that the terms of exit from the EU represents a bad deal. Unnecessary frictions have driven up inflation and held the economy and wages back. That's why new settlement is so urgently needed.<sup>2</sup>

2.2 The UK left the EU in a hurry. Boris Johnson was so desperate to get Brexit over the line that the Withdrawal Agreement left many issues unresolved. The treaty that now governs the UK's relationship with the EU is the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which came into force on 01 May 2021. The TCA might have secured tariff-free trade, but it was also drawn up in haste, and it has never been fully implemented.

2.3 The treaty does however contain a review clause, which states that:

*“The Parties shall jointly review the implementation of this Agreement and supplementing agreements and any matters related thereto five years after the entry into force of this Agreement and every five years thereafter.”*

*TCA – Clause 776*

2.4 At the time of writing, politicians in the UK and Europe are trying to manage expectations. It is possible that the 2026 review will be narrow and technical.<sup>c</sup> However, Keir Starmer is on record as saying that:

*‘[The TCA] is not a good deal — it’s far too thin. As we go into 2025 we will attempt to get a much better deal for the UK.’<sup>3</sup>*

c The lead EU official with responsibility for the TCA has reportedly said: ‘We have really moved on now with this debate [over Brexit] and I think the next decade is one where we’ll deal with future member states, rather than a past member state.’ Financial Times, 15 June 2023 <https://www.ft.com/content/d2beca5b-856d-4de9-849d-6782cde9bfc6>

A different EU official wrote: ‘The TCA is not going to be changed, but there can be agreements on the side.’ <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/13535/pdf/>

2.5 There is no doubt that a ‘much better deal’ is needed. As this report discusses, the TCA as it stands is making us poorer, and it has failed to provide a meaningful ‘level playing field’ for the protection of workers’ rights.

2.6 Government Ministers must shoulder the blame. The labour movement must step up to find solutions.

2.7 The Government’s threat to override its treaty obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill exhausted the goodwill that the UK established through its response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Critically, the Conservative Party continues to risk foundations of the Good Friday Agreement, and the precious peace that it established, through its potential abandonment of the European Convention on Human Rights.

2.8 Through a mixture of undue haste and an ideological opposition to cooperation, the Government has left us with more than £1 billion in additional energy costs each year. The weight of new and duplicate regulation is causing enormous damage in essential sectors, like chemicals. Some important restrictions and frictions are not yet even in force. Without change, the pain will only get worse.

2.9 The UK already imported more from the EU than it exported, but the trade gap is widening. The deficit with Europe reached a record £109 billion in 2023.<sup>4</sup> Even adjusted for inflation, there has never been such an outflow of national wealth since comparable records began. This is money that could be better spent on investment and wages.

2.10 GMB reps report that, in sectors from chemicals to vehicles production, sales to Europe have collapsed, and those orders have not been replaced by demand from the wider world. Complex customs compliance and rules of origin requirements are raising the barriers to trade, and UK suppliers are being cut out as European firms deepen the integration of their supply chains.

2.11 That loss has is not compensated by increased trade with the wider world. In fact, our place in the world is shrinking. Most comparable economies are experiencing a ‘goods trade boom.’<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the UK is falling behind. The UK’s share of global exports has fallen to 3.2 per cent – down from 3.7 per

cent in 2015.<sup>6</sup> We now have the second largest trade deficit on the planet, at a staggering \$121 billion: this hits investment and workers directly in their pockets.<sup>7</sup>

2.12 The UK's post-Brexit trade agreements have mostly replicated previous arrangements, to no additional benefit. Negotiations with the largest economies, such as the United States and India, have stalled. The proposed Canada trade agreement collapsed – and Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch's claims that talks are ongoing were embarrassingly contradicted by the Canadian government.<sup>8</sup>

2.13 Canada's rebuke was one example of how the UK's exit from the EU has diminished our global standing. From scientific research programmes – where the now reversed decision to leave Horizon 'knock[ed] us back both in reputation and in substance in terms of the UK as an international partner in research' – to defence and security cooperation, our diminishing influence has been compounded by political instability under a weak and exhausted Tory government.

2.14 GMB is clear – we need a change of government, but we also need a new deal with Europe to make work better.

### **3. Workers' rights**

***“The Conservatives will guarantee all rights that workers currently enjoy as we leave the European Union.”***

***Theresa May, 2017***

3.1 In theory, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement protects workers' rights.

3.2 In reality, the 'level-playing field' has not prevented the worst assault on workers' rights since the Trade Union Act.

3.3 The Minimum Service Levels are discussed in a separate CEC Statement. The fact must be stated here, though: despite the UK's commitment to uphold the International Labour Organisation's fundamental conventions, the TCA has proved to be an ineffective barrier. As a consequence, in the words of the ETUC: the UK Government has sought 'to repeal workers' rights acquired over 50 years of EU membership.'<sup>9</sup> The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 has already been used to weaken holiday pay and consultation duties under TUPE. Equal pay protections – the 'single source' basis for drawing on cross-employer comparators – was only saved after GMB focused public attention on the issue.

3.4 The idea that economic growth could be unlocked if the UK became a deregulated 'Singapore-on-Thames,' based on a race to the bottom pursued through undercutting neighbouring economies and workers' rights, was always a dangerous fantasy. It requires a common response. GMB believes that trade unions based in the UK and the EU should work together to develop a strong, worker-centred agenda for the 2026 review. This co-operation should take place through our federations and the strong direct ties that GMB is proud to maintain.

3.5 There are clear areas where the TCA's workers' rights clauses should be strengthened. As advice by Professor Federico Ortino by the TUC demonstrates, structural weaknesses include:<sup>10</sup>

- For a complaint (of harm to workers' rights) to succeed, it must be shown that those attacks on workers' rights had a negative effect on trade and investment.



This requirement effectively makes the protection redundant for most public service workers, many of whom are targeted under the Minimum Service Levels.

- Complaints can only be initiated by a state – there is no route for unions to challenge their government, or the government of another country.
- There is no requirement for the UK to match – or even consider – new workers' rights that are implemented at an EU level.

3.6 Continued alignment on workers' rights must be on a 'no-regression' basis. Cuts in workers' rights in Europe cannot trigger cuts in the UK: especially if a Labour Government is elected here and a more rightwing European Parliament is returned this year. But there are clear areas where the UK is falling behind.

3.7 The EU is progressing mutual recognition of disability status and new standards for disabled people's parking rights, and gender pay gap transparency. And at the very least, where violations occur, the bar to bringing complaints must be lowered, and unions must not be left dependent on the permission of a hostile government for a case to be brought. GMB notes and endorses the UK Domestic Advisory Group's recommendation that:

*'The UK and devolved governments should monitor progresses in equality and social policy in the EU and ensure that UK frameworks do not fall behind in areas like pay equality and transparency and accessibility etc.'*<sup>11</sup>

3.8 Harm to workers' rights and representation goes beyond the direct reach of the TCA. GMB has had to fight to maintain our seats on European Works Councils, which – while they have limitations - have proved to be an important mechanism for slowing redundancy proposals and building workers' power across borders.

3.9 Approximately one in eight companies with a EWC have their headquarters in the UK. But UK workers' ability to participate in EWCs has been badly compromised. We can no longer initiate the formation of a Council, and multinationals can remove UK representatives at whim. An employer legal challenge to the post-Brexit basis for UK participation may have been defeated,<sup>12</sup> but the law has been left as an unclear 'dog's breakfast.'<sup>13</sup> EWCs are no alternative to industrial organisation – and GMB reps report a mixed picture in terms of the effectiveness of the EWCs that remain. We believe that a new agreement is needed to restore the UK's status as an equal partner for EWCs, coupled with an organising strategy to make sure that working reps fill those seats.

3.10 On 16 May 2024, the Government announced that it intended to abolish the UK legal framework on EWCs completely.<sup>14</sup> This attack will now be delayed by the general election. However, if the Tories are returned to office then their intention is clear. We must do all we can to prevent this from happening.

3.11 The UK Government has also marginalised workers' voices. The contrast with the United States under the Biden administration, where unions have an active role under a worker-centred trade policy, could not be starker. In the EU's Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) – which monitors the TCA – unions, employers and civil society all have an equal share of seats. The unions occupy only 9 per cent of the seats on the UK's own DAG – despite the efforts of GMB and the TUC to secure better representation and to work with employers where interests align.

3.12 The end of freedom of movement brought hundreds of thousands of workers under the gaze of the dysfunctional Home Office and the UK's hostile immigration system.

3.13 We are proud to represent workers of all nationalities, including many EU nationals. GMB reps report that members who are EU nationals, who have worked in the UK for many years and built strong ties of family and community, found that their settled status was challenged or denied. In the Private Section, one in eight (12 per cent) of reps said that members had had problems with their immigration status. In many cases, the Home Office was at fault, or clearly extenuating circumstances were not considered. GMB reiterates its condemnation of all hostile environment policies, the criminalisation of migration status, and restates its commitment to supporting our members at work.

3.14 One important topic for trade talks is youth mobility schemes. Young workers are especially affected by losses in job opportunities since Brexit. The UK withdrew from Erasmus+ travel and study scheme in favour of a weaker and inferior programme.<sup>15</sup>

3.15 Youth mobility schemes should not be seen as new or controversial. The UK already has agreements in place, which cover young workers' visas for up to three years, with countries as diverse as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Uruguay, Iceland, Japan, and South Korea. Young workers are particularly at risk when order books dry up and employers resort to redundancies before the two year unfair dismissal protection is achieved. In sectors with 'feast and famine' investment cycles, like shipbuilding, it is especially important that our members are able to access work abroad when the order book is fallow at home.

3.16 Our reps survey shows that recruitment and retention problems remain widespread. Although a quarter of reps report that their employer has invested more heavily in apprenticeship schemes since Brexit, 59 per cent of reps also say that their employers are finding it hard to fill posts.

3.17 In April 2024, the EU circumvented private discussions and made a public proposal<sup>d</sup> for the UK to enter into an EU-wide youth mobility scheme. GMB regrets the decision of both the Conservatives and Labour to reject the offer out of hand. There are weakness in the EU's proposal. It suggests that UK young workers would only be able to secure a visa with one EU nation – it would not grant the freedom to work across the EU during the four-year visa period. This is a significant problem in some industries, such as construction, when work often involves moving between short-term projects. But the proposal should be seen as a basis for negotiation. GMB urges the next Government to revisit the issue ahead of the 2026 review.

3.18 As negotiating objectives for 2026, GMB calls for:

- A radically strengthened workers' rights agreement between the UK and the EU, scrapping of the requirement to show a negative impact on trade and investment, and the right for unions to bring complaints.
- The UK must ensure that it does not fall behind Europe on new equalities standards.
- The TUC to work closely with the ETUC to develop a common agenda for the 2026 negotiation.
- UK workers to regain their full rights to initiate and participate in European Works Councils.
- Equal representation for trade unions on UK-EU forums.

- UK membership of the Erasmus+ scheme.

<sup>d</sup> Technically, the proposal was made to the Council of Ministers rather than the UK at this stage.

- An ambitious youth mobility scheme which gives young workers the freedom to seek employment across Europe.
- A determined campaign of opposition against any attempt to take the UK out of the European Convention on Human Rights.

## The impact of Brexit – reps survey 2024

*'Delayed deliveries at Calais from continental Europe [are] causing issues with production.'*  
Manufacturing rep, Yorkshire and the Humber

*'EU Exports now require customs declarations, and all EU imports are now screened by customs, but before they had had EU Status which didn't require as much work.'*  
Security rep, London

*'More red tape, more checks, higher prices.'*  
Retail rep, North West

*'Paperwork: a lot more to fill in. Parts not flowing like they used to.'*  
Manufacturing rep, West Midlands  
*'[Problems with] sourcing water treatment chemicals, service parts for vehicles and machinery.'*  
Utilities rep, South East

*'Increased cost of chemicals such as activated carbon, pumps and electronic parts plus much longer times for supply and delivery.'*  
Utilities rep, South West

*'Increased amount of paperwork to transport goods in/out of Europe. Increased time for goods in transit. Requirement for larger stock of components to allow for delays.'* *'Increased transport costs. Increased administration and compliance cost in the movement of goods driving price rises in products.'*  
Manufacturing reps, North West

*'Aircraft Parts have been impacted making it harder to get parts quickly which is crucial in the Airline industry given the high value, bespoke nature and already limited supply. It has also increased massively the workload on paperwork processing 'digital' and actual paper.'*  
Aviation rep

*'Energy prices are much higher.'*  
Manufacturing rep, East Midlands

*'Can't get skilled labour.'*  
Manufacturing rep, North East

*'Cannot send staff to work in EU without a work permit.'*  
Transport rep, London

*'The main difficulty is in finding businesses that will export to the UK - the import process and taxes mean it isn't worthwhile for many businesses to export to the UK.'*

Third sector rep, East Midlands

## **4. Building a stronger economy**

4.1 Boris Johnson's rushed Brexit deal has left the UK like a car 'with a slow puncture' while our competitors rev their engines. The immediate slowdown in economic activity masks as deeper divergence, as the UK is squeezed out of European supply chains. In many areas, red tape has not been cut: it has doubled through duplication. It is not too late to take action, and there are short-term improvements that we believe the Government should pursue through the 2026 review.

4.2 The 2024 survey of Private Section reps reveals that, where employers trade with the EU:

- Almost half (44 per cent) of reps say that it has become harder to export – rising to more than half (51 per cent) in manufacturing employers.
- Almost two-thirds (57 per cent) of reps say that it has become harder to import components and raw materials from Europe.
- Employers are trying to keep workers in the dark: two-thirds (65 per cent) of reps said that their employers do not consult or update reps on the status of European orders, and only 4 per cent of reps say they are consulted.

4.3 The EU remains by far the UK's most important trading partner. 42 per cent of our exports go to the EU – rising to more than 70 per cent of food and non-alcoholic drink exports. But UK firms have experienced rising trade 'frictions' since export controls were introduced in 2021.

4.4 Exporters now have to navigate a complex web of VAT and customs compliance, which varies EU by EU nation. Our reps in relevant sectors report that these new requirements have introduced significant new red tape and slowed deliveries. Manufacturers have to undertake extensive checks in order to secure the 'CE' marking – which is essential to place their goods on the market in Europe and beyond. Firms must operate a European subsidiary or find an agent within the EU to obtain the mark, which adds yet more cost. Farcically, millions were spent to get ready for the UK's rival marking – UKCA – only for the Government to u-turn on 01 August 2023 and announce that the CE marking would be recognised indefinitely after all.<sup>16</sup>

4.5 Without intervention, the situation will only get worse. Rules of origin requirements<sup>e</sup> have been repeatedly delayed in the automotive sector. Checks on imports from the EU to the UK were delayed five times, and they have only just come into force. GMB will monitor the impact of the new restrictions on our members carefully.

4.6 The cost to producers and taxpayers of post-Brexit red tape is enormous. The National Audit Office reports that the annual estimated cost of customs declarations stands at £7.5 billion. UK taxpayers also face an estimated £4.7 billion bill to set up new border and customs arrangements.<sup>17</sup>

4.7 The ideological decision to break away from European regulators has left UK producers in relevant sectors with a double burden – they must satisfy both UK and EU quality and monitoring standards. This duplication imposes astronomical costs. In the chemicals sector, DEFRA's own impact

assessment found that the cost of duplicating the REACH regulation framework ranged from £1.1 to £3 billion.<sup>18</sup> These costs are unsustainable in a strategic industry: chemicals accounts for 16 per cent of all the UK's exports to the EU each year, with an order book worth £30 billion.<sup>19</sup> These costs must be reduced if sufficient investment is to be made in hydrogen and other adaptive technologies.

4.8 The requirement to maintain a UK REACH scheme is also diverting the Health and Safety Executive from its core functions against a backdrop of underfunding. The slower UK regime risks exposing the natural environment to dangerous compounds, and the UK has failed to match new EU standards which protect workers from exposure to substances associated with cancer, heart disease, and autoimmune damage.<sup>20</sup>

e Rule of Origin are domestic production checks designed to prevent the import of substandard goods into the single market via a non-member nation, such as the UK.

4.9 As regulations diverge over time, this cost will only rise and investment will be redirected elsewhere. As a consequence, our industry is slipping into the slow lane. UK chemicals exports rose by only 2 per cent between 2018 and 2022 – compared to an increase of 25 per cent across the G7.<sup>21</sup>

4.10 Red tape and duplicated regulation has also been blamed for exacerbated medicine shortages, which are already in global short supply. These shortages place the NHS at a disadvantage when it is competing with other nations' healthcare systems.<sup>22</sup> The UK has approved fewer new drugs for treatment than the EU since 2021. The UK's regulator remains dependent on its European counterpart for analysis, and yet the UK has still experienced 'significant regulatory delays' that have contributed to the lack of availability of essential medicines.<sup>23</sup>

4.11 Slow progress has been made in the field of energy co-operation, and – worse – the TCA's energy co-operation clauses are due to expire in 2026. The UK's hasty exit disconnected our energy system from Europe's trading scheme, imposing an estimated £1.1 billion annual cost on producers and energy bills.<sup>24</sup> As the UK Domestic Advisory Group's 2024 'Priorities Report' put it, 'a mix of technical challenges, certain geo-political developments (i.e., the Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent international gas crisis) and **limited political will** has resulted in the April 2022 deadline being missed.'<sup>25</sup> [emphasis added]

4.12 The status of the UK's participation in the European North Seas Energy Cooperation (NSEC) group is also unclear. The Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2022, but the UK no longer participates in the NSEC (which brings together other nations with an interest in the North Sea).<sup>f</sup> Norway is a member of the group, despite not being in the EU. Better co-ordination is needed if infrastructure important to the economic future of the North Sea – such as a UK-Europe hydrogen pipeline – is to be delivered.<sup>26</sup>

4.13 The UK is a year behind the EU's plans to implement a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) – a measure to tax goods' carbon content, which is essential if sectors like steel are to have a future. This delay risks opening the UK up to even greater dumping of artificially subsidised goods. The UK proposal is also different in its design, and it is unclear if it will align with the EU's.

4.14 Unless the two systems are linked, UK exporters will have to account for the embedded carbon content of all their materials and components that fall under the covered sectors, which will be an enormous burden for smaller producers. If the UK and the EU's Emissions Trading Schemes (ETS) could be linked then the need for CBAM pricing between the two parties would be eliminated.

4.15 The UK does not face a single friction – our economy is being ground down from many angles. The accumulated costs risk becoming a permanent drag on jobs and wages. The growing divergence – and the temptation for employers to undercut strong safety standards – risks exposing our members to devastating trade wars.

4.16 This economic damage has not fallen equally across the UK. Along with the enormous political damage caused by the breakdown in Stormont – and the resulting real-terms cuts in public sector workers pay in Northern Ireland – the decline in trade has been five times greater in the manufacturing heartland of the Midlands, where the value of exports has fallen by 13 per cent.<sup>27</sup> This government's Brexit deal has made a tragic mockery of the levelling up agenda.

<sup>f</sup> Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the European Commission.

4.17 Brexit has also changed the nature of the devolution settlement within the UK. The devolved nations previously had a direct relationship with the European Union. Now, power has been concentrated in Whitehall and Westminster. The UK Government is set to be the UK's only negotiating partner in 2026. The devolved governments, parliaments and assemblies should be offered a formal role in negotiating a new settlement with the EU, and scrutinising it.

4.18 GMB calls for much closer working with European authorities and an end to the ideological aversion to co-operation over regulation. Alternative and better approaches should be sought. Switzerland shares important sectors, including chemicals – but it has negotiated an assumed adoption of new regulations, with the right to opt-out if compelling reasons apply.<sup>28</sup> These arrangements are the product of years of negotiation. They contradict the claim that subscription to common standards would leave the UK as a 'rule-taker' – new regulations could be 'opted-out' of if serious concerns applied. This lighter approach costs far less, and it gives industry much greater certainty over future investment.

4.19 The Brexit deal has also cut the UK off from important sources of funding for regional development and third sector organisations. By one recent estimate, three in four (74 per cent) of employment support charities had suffered a reduction in funding following the end of UK access to the European Social Fund.<sup>29</sup> The Tories' replacement regional funding was already lower – and now Rishi Sunak is proposing to cut that funding even further to fund his 'National Service' proposal.

4.20 In common with existing policy, as set out in the 2021 Special Report on Spending and Procurement, we call for the TCA's clauses that mirror WTO restrictions on domestic contents in contracts to be repealed, so that both parties can adopt a full alternative to the Biden administration's industrial strategy which heavily promotes domestic production.

4.21 GMB has already worked hard on these issues through our political engagement work. To this end, we secured commitments in the 2023 Labour Party Final Stage National Policy Forum report that:

*'The current government's Brexit deal has led to increased bureaucracy, putting jobs and investment at risk in sectors like chemicals, science and the automotive industry. A Labour government will seek to support businesses and consumers by working to reduce unnecessary red tape.'*

4.22 Alongside the Labour Party's existing commitments to pursue a new veterinary and agro-foods agreement and progress on mutual recognition of qualifications, GMB believes that further work is needed to achieve these ends.

4.23 As negotiating objectives, GMB calls for:

- New customs and VAT agreements to reduce economic frictions.
- Adoption of 'Swiss-style' regulatory co-operation between the UK and Europe in chemicals and other key sectors.
- Renewal of the TCA's energy co-operation clauses, a new energy trading arrangement, and restoration of the UK's membership of the North Seas Energy Cooperation group.
- The UK to bring forward its CBAM scheme if possible, and align its Emissions Trading Scheme with Europe.
- The devolved governments, parliaments, and assemblies should be offered a formal role in the negotiation and scrutiny of any new agreement with the EU.
- Restoration of regional and civil society funding to pre-Brexit levels.
- The removal of TCA clauses that bar domestic contents requirements for manufactured goods under government contracts.

## 5. Security

5.1 The world has become less safe since the UK formally left the EU in 2019. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, war in the Middle East and beyond, energy insecurity, and humanitarian crises all underline the need for stronger co-operation.

5.2 In recognition of these new and renewed threats, GMB welcomes the Labour Party's ambition to strike a new defence and security agreement with the EU.

5.3 This is a missed opportunity to be remedied. The Government's 2019 Political Declaration held open the prospect of an agreement that would cover 'foreign policy, security and defence and wider areas of cooperation.'<sup>30</sup> However, Boris Johnson u-turned and excluded a formal agreement from the UK's treaty with the EU. The UK has not participated in the EU's programme to fund ammunition for Ukraine, and the Government has only attended one meeting of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council (in the aftermath of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine).

5.4 Any UK participation in the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation structure, which works on a project-by-project basis, must recognise the unique nature of the shipbuilding industry. We reassert GMB policy that the failed project of international tendering for UK defence shipbuilding orders must be brought to an end. Instead, Ministers should learn from AUKUS and other examples of collaboration between governments to build up our domestic defence industrial base.

5.5 As negotiating objectives, GMB calls for:

- The UK to enter into a new defence and security agreement with the EU.
- Recognition that the shipbuilding sector is different to the other areas of defence, and Labour's pledge to award contracts with domestic shipyards must not be infringed.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 As we approach a general election, there is little media appetite to talk about Europe. But the current approach is broken and it is harming wages, employment, and the national economic interest.

6.2 GMB has never been afraid to tackle the difficult issues. We respect the results of the referendum. But our members are clear that the status quo is not working. After years of political posturing, a new relationship with Europe that undoes the slow economic damage of the Conservative exit deal must be pursued.

6.3 This report sets out a serious, realistic and credible agenda for policies that could be achieved in two years' time.

6.4 Thirty-six years ago, Jacques Delors delivered his famous speech on a social Europe to the TUC Congress here, in Bournemouth. It is time to put the labour interest back into the Europe debate. GMB calls for a new deal with Europe with workers' rights at its heart.

## Appendix – reps' survey results

### Survey background

A survey of GMB Private Section reps was carried out in May 2024. 283 responses were received across a broad range of industries as of 15 May. Responses to free-text questions are summarised elsewhere in the report.

### What sector do you work in? Please pick the option that applies best to you

Sector	Percentage
Manufacturing	34.6
Utilities (including energy)	20.1
Other	14.1
Retail	13.4
Transport and logistics (including ports and airports)	13.4
Services	3.2
Construction	1.1

### Which devolved nation or English region is your normal place of work in?

Nation or region	Percentage
North West	17.1
London	15.4
Scotland	14.3
West Midlands	10.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	8.6
East Midlands	8.2



South East	8.2
South West	6.1
North East	5.7
Wales	5.4
Northern Ireland	1.1

**Does your employer import or export goods, raw materials, or components to or from the EU?**

Response	Percentage
Yes	58.8
No	23.7
Don't know	17.6

**Thinking about your employer, has it become easier or harder to export to the EU than it was five years ago?**

Response	Percentage
It has become easier	1.4
It has stayed the same	8.5
It has become harder	29.0
Don't know	32.5
Not applicable	28.6

Among reps who said that their employer did import or export with the EU, **43.9 per cent** reported that exporting had become harder compared to five years ago.

Among manufacturing reps whose employers import or export with the EU, **51.2 per cent** reported that exporting had become harder compared to five years ago.

**Thinking about your employer, has it become easier or harder to import from the EU than it was five years ago?**

Response	Percentage
It has become easier	1.8
It has stayed the same	8.8
It has become harder	37.5
Don't know	30.7
Not applicable	21.2

Among reps who said that their employer did import or export with the EU, **57.3 per cent** reported that importing had become harder compared to five years ago.

Among manufacturing reps whose employers import or export with the EU, **54.7 per cent** reported that exporting had become harder compared to five years ago.

**Does your employer consult or keep you up to date on successes or challenges it is experiencing with EU orders?**

Response	Percentage
Yes - they consult us	3.5
Yes - they keep us updated	14.5

No	54.1
Don't know	10.6
Not applicable	17.3

Excluding 'not applicable' responses, **65.4 per cent** of reps reported that their employer did not inform or consult them.

### **Are your employer's UK operations covered by a European Works Council (EWC)?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	14.2
No - but they used to be	2.1
No	12.8
Don't know	70.9

### **To your knowledge, have any GMB members at your workplace who are EU nationals experienced problems with their immigration status since 2019?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	12.2
No	44.6
Don't know	43.2

### **Is your employer currently experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	59.1
No	27.4
Don't know	13.5

### **In your opinion, is your employer investing more or less in apprenticeship programmes since Brexit?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
It is about the same	28.3
More	26.1
Less	25.0
Don't know	20.6

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## *CARRIED*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to debate the CEC Report: Europe. I hope you have had a chance to read it. Once the report has been moved again I will call each region to speak. This is a chance to speak for or against the report on behalf of your delegation. Can I please ask Margaret Gregg and Gary Harris to move and second the statement on behalf of the CEC. Thank you.

MARGARET GREGG (CEC): President, Congress, moving the special report on Europe on behalf of the CEC. It is hard to believe that almost a decade has passed since the Referendum. The CEC knows that Brexit continues to divide opinion in our union as it

does in the country but we as a union have never shied away from controversial questions and the first opportunity to review the UK agreement with the EU is fast approaching so we must have a decision. This report does not invite reopening the wounds of the past nor is it about overriding the policies that you, Congress, have carried in previous years. We respect the result of the Referendum but we must also be honest, the status quo is not working. More than half our manufacturing reps say that it has become harder to import and export goods, raw materials, and components. The cost to the UK is astronomical. £7.5bn extra costs to exporters each year because of new red tape at Customs. A billion pounds extra to the cost of energy and another billion extra on chemical manufacturers who now have to follow two separate sets of regulations. The list could go on. The promise to protect workers' rights has been broken. The trade and cooperation agreement provided no protection when this Tory Government rammed the Minimum Service Levels through Parliament, some of the most restrictive legislation in a democracy. So much for the so-called level playing field for workers' rights. Now as Rishi Sunak goes to election he wants to turn down the remaining law on European Works Councils. The Tories must be taken on and they must be defeated. Congress, if we have a Labour government next month they need to set out a different approach and we need a new deal with Europe, an agreement based on reducing the red tape so that components and medicines can flow freely again, an agreement based on cooperation not petty point scoring and facility so that we can work together on national security and energy investment, and workers' rights must be at its heart.

Congress, this report does not make unrealistic demands. There is little point in spending our energy in the short term on topics which are not going to be on the table. The report sets out a serious and credible set of demands. It is based on consultation with our reps and through our lay structures and, ultimately, it sets out an agenda for a new deal with Europe that would make work better. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Gary, to second, please.

GARY HARRIS (CEC): President, Congress, seconding the report on behalf of the CEC. The media does not want to talk about Europe but the issues raised by this report could not be more serious. Time and again the Tories have strung themselves ready to risk the fragile peace in Northern Ireland. Their threat to leave the Europe Convention on Human Rights undermines the foundations of the Good Friday Agreement, and the political instability triggered by the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill shut down the Assembly, inflicting sharp, real terms, pay cuts on our members in public services, and across the UK the economy is suffering. There is a global trade boom but we are in the slow lane. We are poorer, smaller and our voice is fainter on the international stage. We cannot go on like this. That is why as the CEC we are proposing an agenda for a new deal with Europe. Let me be clear, the review in two years' time will not be the end of the debate. The question of the UK's relationship with Europe will be debated many times at Congress in the future. The UK is headed towards an important negotiation and we are seeking a strong mandate for the policies and priority that we believe will benefit our members. As with any negotiation, we will seek the views of our reps, and members,

through our democratic structures when that negotiation has been concluded. On that basis I ask you, Congress, please support the report. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Can I have the first speaker from London Region, please?

DAVE LEVY (London) speaking on the Special Report on a New Deal with Europe. The London Region supports the CEC's negotiations and objectives outlined in the Special Report. Although we do not want to reopen any old wounds or step on existing policy, our members across all sectors are adamant the status quo just is not working for working people. The Tories' rushed exit from Europe has failed this industry and sparked new attacks on workers' rights. The 2026 review offers the first opportunity to address the failings of the Tories' exit plan and secure a level playing field to protect jobs, rebuild the economy, and defend in advance workers' rights. It is critical that the GMB is in a position to influence the priorities for any such negotiations so a renewed trade cooperation agreement works for our members and thus we support the report's negotiation objectives. We need to ensure that the UK does not fall behind Europe on equality standards. We need to ensure that the UK does not fall behind Europe on workers' protection standards. We need to ensure that the UK is not taken out of the European Convention on Human Rights. We welcome the proposal to support a new youth mobility scheme with the EU offering reciprocal access to work and higher education. We note the statements by the report and server respondents that it is harder to recruit and harder to work in Europe, even on secondment, and welcomes steps to reduce these barriers. We need more regulatory cooperation in key sectors, with particular interest in those listed in the report, and improved cooperation in the energy market. Our energy workers branch is about 2,500 members strong and there is the need to prepare the market for benefit work for both workers and consumers. We also welcome the recognition of the damage done to the third sector by our exclusion from the European Social Fund. After years of political posturing and the clear movement in opinion it is time for grownups to enter the room and begin to undo the slow economic damage caused by the Tories' ideological rush to get out of the door. It is time to reset the relationship with Europe to one that is built on the strong recognition of workers' rights and cooperation. We share the motion's position and we urge that we need both a change of government and a new deal with Europe to make work better. We are committed to work tirelessly for both. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Midlands speaker: Formally. Thank you very much. A speaker from North East, Yorkshire & Humber? Formally. Thank you. North West & Irish?

JOE SMITH (North West & Irish): Supporting the Special Report and New Deal with Europe. President, Congress, Brexit has also changed the nature of the devolution settlements within the UK. The devolved nations previously had a direct relationship with the European Union. Now power has been concentrated in Whitehall and Westminster. The UK government is set to be the UK's only negotiation partner in 2026. The devolved governments, parliaments and assemblies, including the Northern Ireland Assembly, should be offered a formal role in negotiating a new settlement within the EU.

Congress, being a branch secretary of a general branch we all know no news is good news but when one of your workplace organisers contacts you not with work-related problems but with concerns about daily operations in the workplace due to the impact Brexit is having, it proves we need a new deal with Europe. Brexit's structural shift is hurting the North West, with increased branches in raw materials, logistic issues, and bureaucratic barriers affecting trade imports. All these problems have added impact on finishing products. Two-fifths of the UK export still report decreased volume due to fluctuating impact on logistical issues. When materials arrive it sometimes means companies must rely on agency workers due to the skilled labour shortages to get finished products to their customers. I also want to talk about the effect on small businesses and, as you know, WH7 branch in Wigan support York disabled workers and I am involved in that quite strong and I just want to give you the basics here of the impact Brexit is having on York, which is astronomical, raw material increase, timber 200% increase, flags 300% increase, the Correx board that you use for placards 150% increase, logistics 150% increase, all the materials that averages out between 100 and 150%. Four years ago flags cost £8 per flag. Now they are £15. At the same time York had to reduce its profit by 10% to 8% to try and keep costs down. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joe. Spot-on with the timing there. A speaker from Scotland, please?

RODERICK MACKENZIE (GMB Scotland): First time speaker. (*Applause*) Speaking in support of the CEC Special Report. Congress, regardless of how you voted in the EU referendum and how you would vote now I believe there are very few of us who would say that the deal struck by the Tories has protected workers' rights. Boris Johnson's deal was one which was signed in a hurry. Before the ink had even dried on the deal the Tories began building a bonfire on which they burned right after right. The result of this has been the decay of working and living standards across our economy. Far from removing red tape the Tories have added rolls of it, which is costing our economy billions and hampering growth of jobs and pay. It is unclear exactly what the Tories have to show from the agreement other than the decline of our economy and jobs. These days the EU deal could look a million times better. Our relationship with the EU looks like it depends on what the UK government of the day chooses to prioritise and what they are willing to concede. As a trade unionist we know how bargaining and negotiating works and we know that we can always renegotiate as we do with employers each year. Reviewing the deal is not a betrayal to democracy, in fact it is looking into the agreement the UK government negotiated, like Norway renegotiated, our relationship with our closest partners will become commonplace and a key feature of an election campaign, and especially welcome in the Special Report is recognition of the devolved governments in negotiations and carving out a clear role for them in talks. The EU referendum produced a very clear divide between our four nations. This issue matters to voters. Congress, please support this Special Report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Roderick. Thank you. A speaker from Southern Region?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern) supporting the CEC Special Report on our relationship with the EU. I would like to do more than support it and also congratulate National Office for such a fantastic piece of work and I must admit I probably like many of you when I saw the fact we had a debate about Europe, I thought, "Oh, my god, not again because we've done that." But the GMB can be proud that we were really the people that took Brexit more seriously than anyone and once the referendum had happened and we knew we were going to leave the EU, we got down with our fantastic experts at National Office and also reaching out to our reps in the regions and nations working in the industries that were going to be affected, and we drilled down into the detail.

Dave Clements, my friend from Dover, when Keir Starmer came down to visit we really drilled into how it was going to affect shipping, we discussed with him the food industry, the chemical industry and how the regulations were going to impact on the jobs and the economy, and we drew up really detailed recommendations to try and engage with the government and financially the British government, the Tory clown army, were doing nothing to prepare. It was just on a wing and a prayer. It is really, really useful that this report is saying, these are the nitty-gritty practical issues that need to be negotiated with Europe, which is this enormous economy just 20 miles away from the UK and that we need to negotiate all of those things, we need to make sure that we do have frictionless trades through our ports, we need to make sure that our chemical industry is not bound up by a gap in regulation between us and Europe. All of those things need to be done. Absolutely what is great about the report as well is that it puts to bed the debate of the past. The thing about politics is that nobody gets what they want. People voted for Brexit and probably half the people in the room voted for Brexit, if we are honest, because our membership was split down the line on this. People voted for what they thought they were going to get, less immigration and a promise there would a ship Singapore on Thames and deregulated prosperity. That was never going to happen from this Tory government. They cock everything up. They can't fix the potholes. They were never ever going to achieve that. On the other side of the debate there were people who were living in cloud cuckoo land that European Union is some socialist paradise. Remember, we were in battles with the European Union about the Viking, the Laval, and the Postal Workers Directive, because they were undermining workers' rights from Europe. We were in conflict with them about that. Look what is happening in Europe now, Germany is manufacturing in the recession. We have seen yesterday in France Marine Le Pen's party is 32% even more right-wing with the Conquest Party 7%, nearly 40% of the French people voting for far right parties. The Alliance of Deutschland is the second largest party in Germany despite the fact it turned out in their election campaign that one of their leading MPs was a Chinese spy and they have neo-Nazis in them. Europe is not perfect either, comrades. What is good is this union. What is good is the work that this union has done to actually address the issues of our relationship with Europe and this is a fantastic piece of work. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Finally, a speaker from Wales & South West?

WAYNE EDWARDS (GMB Wales & South West): How do you follow that! President, Congress, supporting this Special Report. First time at Congress, second time speaking. *(Applause)* Congress, this report is an important step in setting out what



have been UK Brexit plans. We think this is a foundation stone for GMB in setting out the future for working people. It prioritises working with our friends in Europe on the things we agree, like stronger rights for working people, putting us on a level footing on equalities legislation and strengthening our defences with our European brothers and sisters. It also sets out to protect our position in bargaining with large European companies, protecting our status on workers' councils and in pan-European negotiations. For us it is important. Realigning the CBAM will strengthen British and European steel making against global competitive forces outside the COP agreements with poor carbon standards and even worse labour laws. The last thing we need as a divergence from our European neighbours is a race to the bottom competing on diverging standards.

Congress, our members in Port Talbot are the ones who are paying the price for a lack of a plan from the Tory rabble in Westminster. We need to talk to the next Labour government on how are we going to build a steel making industry fit for the future. *(Applause)* That is an important part of this. Congress, this also defends shipbuilding jobs on the Torridge and the Tamar. Let's say it loud and clear, defence contracts are of national interest and our national safety demands that our defence fleets should be built here in Britain at British shipyards and, importantly, Congress, this report calls for devolved administration to be involved in discussions around any new deal with Europe. When our relationship is established in the next few years these administrations must have a say. Never again can we see the selling out of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland while Tory ministers prioritise deals that protect the jobs of those in Surrey rather than Swansea. All parts of the UK must have their say and the only way of doing it is by using devolved administrations from each country. Support the report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Wayne. Just before I go to the vote can I ask movers and seconders of Motions 104, 105, Composite 11, and Motions 189, 190, and 192 to make their way down to the front. I will put that report, all those in favour of adopting the report please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

*The CEC Report: Europe was CARRIED.*

## POLITICAL IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Political Immigration and Migration. The mover of Motion 184 please come to the rostrum. Do we have the mover of Motion 184?

## **REFUGEES AND GOVERNMENT CRUELTY MOTION 184**

### **184. REFUGEES AND GOVERNMENT CRUELTY**

This Congress strongly objects to the way in which refugees and asylum seekers are being treated by the Government. Recently HM Government has been found to have misled the public in the way it announced to have "dealt with the backlog of claims" for those seeking asylum or to have their case heard. Thousands have been taken off the list to cover the fact that there remains a crisis in the whole system caused by the Government itself. This is either in built incompetence, deliberate hidden policy to frustrate claims or to deny claimants their legitimate right to have their claim dealt with fairly.

Each claim is a human being trying to improve their life chances. Yet months and years of indecision, lack of progress and loss of hope is causing unnecessary mental anxiety, stress and in some instances suicide. Where claimants are entitled to some limited benefits, they are trapped often with very low weekly income unable to work and use their skills to benefit others. Many desperate to break out of an inhumane and soulless process designed to deter and frustrate claimants.

Community Sponsorship and support programmes have demonstrated the power of people building solidarity and partnerships to show a welcome of love and common humanity often with great results for all concerned.

The crisis is not the claimants but the decisions by some politicians to misuse their position to demonise, frustrate and deny legitimate rights given under international conventions for those seeking asylum or a place of safety.

We urge the GMB to look at campaigning with partner agencies, political networks both international, national and local level to:

- Expose the inhumanity of the current UK process and its failure to have sufficient resources dedicated to deal with claims in a fair and transparent manner.
- To expose the untruths about how claims are being dealt with and to have honest assessments of the claims process and progress of claims, not cover up.
- To campaign for the Government to open proper channels for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to make legitimate claims for the right to enter UK without having to resort to using people traffickers.
- To campaign to enable claimants living in the UK to have access to work or training to enable them apply their skills for the benefit of the UK economy and to support themselves while claims are being processed. This is especially at a time when we still have many shortages across sectors of the UK economy.
- To encourage Regions, Branches and our equalities forums to develop bonds of solidarity with Community Sponsorship schemes in their areas and to highlight the positive stories in relation to claimants and their journeys.
- To speak out and defend the rights of claimants and to oppose those organisations seeking to demonise and attack the legitimate rights of claimants and to sow discord in our communities.

We share a common humanity and solidarity that is undermined when we don't speak out and when injustice is evident and real people become victims.

## **Q22 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH North West & Irish Region**

*(Carried)*

MAREK KROUK (North West & Irish): The Government has a disgraceful record when dealing with refugees. Many have been deliberately treated cruelly by the Government through the policies and the practices of government that willingly tells lies and disguises the truth in order to protect themselves. Yet behind (*Applause*) yet behind this the truth is that individuals and families are treated in an awful way. This is not about the boat people or those who the Government are calling illegal immigrants. It is

including other groups too. The Government could not leave the European Court of Human Rights just for that, or continue despite that, with the good strong communities and trade unions against the highly expensive Rwanda scheme. Even if it happens it will only make a small impact on the numbers who are desperate to leave and be given hope, desperate to be treated with dignity, desperate to have somewhere safe to live and bring up the family, desperate to pay back through their skills and good work and contribute positively, to continue positively in the country they hope will welcome them. With thousands removed from waiting lists and making their figures look good is more lies and deceit. Congress, we have a chance to stop the lies and the madness, and the cruelty. In July let's make those responsible pack their bag. We say get out of number 10. *(Applause)* We all should be equal. They should not decide who lives and who dies. Congress, I move. *(Standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Marek, a brilliant speech. A seconder for that motion, please?

TOM WILLIAMS (North West & Irish): In my work I meet with many families who seek asylum, most weeks in fact. Almost all of them have horrific stories to tell. Some came to Manchester, fleeing war, others principal repression, and some because they are at risk in their home country because they are LGBT+. Most are desperate to work. Many are unable to get the healthcare support they need, especially for their mental health, and almost all of them have been stuck in a broken and uncaring system, some for many years. Even when people finally receive a decision, including when they cleared the backlog, they are treated appallingly. They are evicted from their asylum accommodation at short notice, and a lot of them forced into homelessness. One family I met having been evicted from their asylum accommodation told me they had spent two weeks living in Shudehill bus station in Manchester. They are not alone. Earlier this year up to 80 people per day had presented daily at Manchester Town Hall as homeless having been evicted from their asylum accommodation. Local councils are being forced to pick up the pieces of a broken asylum system. We need a fair and caring asylum system that treats everyone as a human. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tom. The mover of Motion 185, please?

## **LGBT+ REFUGEES IN RWANDA MOTION 185**

### **185. LGBT + REFUGEES IN RWANDA**

This Congress notes that our UK Government want to blindly take our country into a treaty with Rwanda.

The government refuse to accept independent reports that question the safety of the people that are sent there, at present there is no evidence to suggest that they will be safe.

For people who have risked their lives already to desperately reach what should have been the safety of the British shores.

The Tory government is intent on the further displacement of these vulnerable people to send them to a country with a violent past and an abysmal Human Rights record.

It appears that having standards to ensure LGBT+ refugees are not returned to countries where they face persecution, torture or death is no longer part of the Tory governments Mandate.

The government is trying to push this into Legislation.

We must lobby our politicians to vote against such an abhorrent right-wing approach to those seeking safety in our country.

We the GMB as a trade union should be supporting the rights of those who seek safety not to be returned, and encouraging our affiliates to do the same.

We call upon congress.

To fight for the Human Rights of refugees, condemn the policy and reaffirm our support for the LGBT+ people.

### **G95 – GLASGOW NURSES GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

CIORSTAI DH REICHL E (GMB Scotland): Rwanda signed the UN statement condemning violence against LGBT people. The UK Government wants us to believe that Rwanda is a progressive country. The UK Government thinks that sending LGBT+ refugees to Rwanda is morally acceptable. Why? Libya and Israel have previously sent refugees there. However, neither of which currently have a sterling reputation on human rights. The Rwanda Bill failed to consider the safety of LGBT+ people. I will explain. Rwanda signed the UN statement but has offered no protection for LGBT people, in fact same sex marriage is banned and our trans siblings suffer torture and death. Three years ago legislation was introduced into Rwanda which made living an open LGBT+ life a crime punishable by up to five years in prison and for their family and friends, and the authorities, there is also punishment by imprisonment. In 2023, concerns were raised and it was found that significant discrimination towards the LGBT+ communities was carried out by the authorities themselves. Congress, the Tory Government and the right-wing support are hell bent on turning around refugees that believe the UK would be a haven for them. They are rewarded for making and surviving treacherous journeys by being sent to a country with a violent past and an abysmal human rights record. In 2022, the UK Government warned UK LGBT+ people against visiting Rwanda due to the ill treatment. The Tory Government themselves were assessing Rwanda, so to send any LGBT+ person there would be morally reprehensible. We call upon Congress to fight for the human rights of the refugees, to condemn the bill and reaffirm our support for the LGBT+ communities. Congress, this is why there should always be a protest. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. A seconder?

MELANIE GALE (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, why does the country accept this? Why are we standing by and watching the Tories prepared to send refugees to Rwanda. In 1948, we recognised the UN's Declaration of Human Rights and signing up

to join the European Union in the Autumn of 1966. Then in 1984 the UK signed the UN Convention against Torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This in our country, and looking at this as well, at our own 1988 Human Rights Act it all looks impressive. However, the present government have forgotten this impressive history. All LGBT+ people experience abuse of human rights which is every day in Rwanda. Congress, we must condemn this and put our support behind these LGBT+ refugees and finally, Congress, what does it say about us as a nation now if we let this happen. Congress, please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mel. Does anyone wish to oppose any of those motions? No? I ask Dean Gilligan from the CEC to respond, please.

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): Hi. President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motion 184, tacitly delivered by Marek over there. The CEC has been incredibly concerned with the rhetoric from the Government and physical treatment of refugees, most acutely exemplified by the commission of the Bibby Stockholm. We have to get these desperately cruel Tories out of government. The use of a barge whose owners have historic ties to the Transatlantic slave trade, according to the Refugee Council, is further testament to how nasty this party is. Our qualifications, first of all, are that we will consult with members who work with the refugees and asylum seekers, using their expertise to help formulate solutions to issues raised and, secondly, that we will need properly to assess every part of the agencies and community support groups we work with to ensure that they align with our work and values. Thank you, Congress. Please support with the qualifications. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Does North West & Irish Region accept the qualification on Motion 184? *(Agreed)* Thank you. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 184 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: The CEC is supporting Motion 185. All those in favour of Motion 185 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 185 was CARRIED.*

## **SOCIAL POLICY: JUSTICE**

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We move on to Social Policy: Justice, so could we have the mover of Composite 11, please?

### **JUSTICE FOR SUB-POSTMASTERS AND GMB SUPPORT FOR MR. BATES AND THE SUB-POSTMASTERS ALLIANCE COMPOSITE 11**

Covering Motions;

193. JUSTICE FOR SUB POSTMASTERS – North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

194. GMB SUPPORT FOR MR BATES AND THE SUBPOSTMASTERS ALLIANCE – Wales & South West Region

### **JUSTICE FOR SUB POSTMASTERS AND GMB SUPPORT FOR MR BATES AND THE SUBPOSTMASTERS ALLIANCE**

Congress is concerned that It's been two decades of struggle for the hundreds of sub-postmasters who were wrongly convicted of fraud as a result of a fault in the Post Office 'Horizon' computer system and their institutional obstinacy, refusing to properly investigate such failure but rather abused their cooperate privilege to wrongly convict many without any tangible evidence of fraud, and destroy the lives of many others by terminating their contract thereby taking away their livelihood and investment.

This group have achieved much in their fight for justice against an aggressive, obstinate corporate giant, however the fight is now directly with the Government as sole owner of Post Office who are exhausting bureaucratic delay tactics preventing a conclusion or swift and appropriate compensation. We call upon GMB to work with Mr. Bates and the Sub-postmasters Alliance, offering any support needed.

- This Congress calls upon the lobbying of the GMB Sponsored MPs from all Regions to actively maintain pressure on the government to ensure the sub postmasters who were innocently implicated in the Horizon scandal, receive full justice as a matter of urgency. We ask the GMB to use its influence to lobby Government and to encourage the TUC to support and augment any actions in support of this group.
- To call on the Government to amend legislation that prevents any organisation who has such power to bring criminal convictions without first having appropriate checks & balances by an independent review body, and ensure the law in every legal situation is based on the need to prove guilt opposed to proving innocence.
- To ensure a swift full pay-out of compensation is undertaken as pledged, and not left to an incoming Labour administration to pick up the responsibility.
- To lobby for the reclamation of all bonuses paid out to senior executives in post during this period. Should the public enquiry identify gross failure bring those accountable to prosecution for any wrongfulness.
- To call for the public discrediting of the former CEO Post Office Paula Vennells and the revoking of her CBE.

Moving region: Wales & South West

Seconding region: North East, Yorkshire & Humber

*(Carried)*

MARK BOWLER (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, we have been concerned that a trusted institution such as the Post Office held such power and control without any real accountability. This led to abuse of authority and some horrendous consequences involving several hundred former postmasters. Their fight for justice needs our help as they are up against a tyrant of a corporate giant and a Tory government who have lied and backtracked, and dragged this injustice out for decades. The motion is asking GMB to liaise with the Sub-postmasters Alliance and offer any support that we can. We are

asking that we use our influence to lobby the Government and the TUC to augment and quicken their fight for justice, to call on the incoming government to amend legislation so that no organisation going forward would ever be able to hold such power. Never again should we have an accused person be put in a position of having to prove their innocence. We ask that we use all our power to lobby for a quick conclusion and full settlement of compensation which have been pledged by the previous lying Tory Government. We must make sure that the tab for the compensation, which will run into hundreds of millions, will be for ever attributed to the corrupt Conservative administration and not blamed onto an incoming Labour government which will ultimately have to find the money. We need to ensure that Fujitsu pay their share and do not escape their part of blame. Let's add our voice to the many that are calling for the retrieval of bonuses paid to senior executives that were in post at the time augmenting the call for the custodial sentencing when evidence allows. Colleagues, despite the much progress made in recent weeks their fight is not over until everyone is appropriately compensated and justice accomplished. Let us add our strength to this fight, standing in solidarity. I move.

THE PRESIDENT: Well Done, Mark. Thank you. The seconder?

LESLIE TIMBEY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, President, whilst this might be one of the shortest of all the motions we are discussing this week, I am sure we would all agree that this is one that has affected so many of us. This is the biggest miscarriage of justice ever in this country. The gross injustice of the Horizon scandal is nothing short of appalling, individuals and families have been left devastated. Misinformation and, frankly, lies have been fed by some of the most influential figures in British society. After years and years of fighting for justice, it took an ITV drama to finally get the political class to step up and take notice. (*Applause*)

Here I want to pay tribute to my outgoing MP, Kevin Jones, who was once an officer for the GMB. Kevin has been steadfast in his support of the sub-postmasters for many years. I would like to thank him for standing by his principles and fighting for justice for these hardworking men and women for many years. I can only hope his successor will do the same. For the record, I thank Kevin for all he has done for the sub-postmasters and their families. Meanwhile, we have the likes of Paula Vennells with her CBE and her huge payout. Many people were grateful for the calling of a general election but no one more than dear Paula, who managed to avoid all the media scrutiny she deserves as she stood to give evidence to parliament. We may have seen the back of Paula but postmasters and their families are still suffering, waiting for convictions to be overturned and waiting for compensation. Furthermore, the fat cats of the Post Office do not want to be held to account and in yesterday's *Sunday Mirror* there was an article relating to the former chief lawyer of the Post Office, Jane Macleod, who in 2019 accepted an industry award as the sub-postmasters fought for justice.

THE PRESIDENT: Les, could you wind up, please? Sorry.

LESLIE TIMBEY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, please support this motion and keep pressure on all so the postmasters get the justice that they deserve. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Les. Thank you. Can I have the mover of 189, please?

## **ABORTION RIGHTS MOTION 189**

### **189. ABORTION RIGHTS**

Congress asserts safe, legal, free and accessible abortion is a healthcare right that allows women to participate fully in society which underpins their ability to work and improve their lives.

Congress notes with concern the unprecedented use of the Offences Against the Persons Act 1861 (OAPA) in UK courts to prosecute women who self-managed their abortions or had miscarriages, some over lockdown.

The OAPA 1861 has been used five times in 2023 to prosecute women with more in the pipeline. The law is outdated, and these cases have led to calls for abortion law reform to take women out of the firing line.

Congress further notes that the legislation has not been used in this way before.

Congress believes that abortion does not belong in the courts and calls for a modernisation of abortion law and medical guidelines to bring Britain into line with modern medicine and international legal guidelines.

Congress resolves to:

- Lobby MPs to back legal reform of abortion in Parliament
- To support the grassroots campaign by Abortion Rights
- To encourage regions and local branches to join GMB's national affiliation of Abortion Rights.

## **X59 NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

WILLIAM PATERSON (London): Congress, on 15<sup>th</sup> May two young people appeared in a British court charged with illegally aborting a foetus. They are being charged under the Offences Against the Persons Act 1861, a Victorian law that is being used to prosecute these young people who took a deeply personal and private decision. One of the reasons they were in this position was because they discovered that their pregnancy fell outside the time within which it is legal to have an abortion. Now they are charged with offences under the law passed 163 years ago in completely different circumstances to solve different problems. This case should never have come to the courts. Women who seek to end their pregnancy outside the current law are doing so because they are desperate. Many of them are in desperate situations in which the correct response of a humane society is care and compassion, instead they face a traumatic trial and life imprisonment.



England and Wales have amongst the most severe punishments for an illegal abortion in the world. These outdated laws are more severe than those in Texas where the same offence carries a short sentence or a fine. Indeed, our laws are more severe than in countries not so widely appreciated for their democratic traditions as ours. Just across the Irish Sea on both sides of the border women are not criminalised for legal abortions. Women are not criminalised in France nor are they criminalised in 50 other countries worldwide. In England and Wales our laws enable us to put women, who have been through a traumatic personal experience, in prison for life.

It would be bad enough if the case of these two young people was an exception to the rule but it is not. It is part of a worrying trend to make increasing use of this legislation. We have seen six women charged under the Offence Against the Persons Act in 2023 alone. Home Office data shows an increasing number of people in England and Wales are being investigated by the police over suspected illegal abortions. There were eight such cases in 2012, 28 cases in 2020, and 40 cases in 2021. We should be deeply concerned that this legislation is being used in a new more sinister way. This is deeply unjust for the women at the centre of these cases and it will have an effect on many more. We should bear in mind there is the Fawcett Society. This is taking place at the same time that reports of rape are rising to historic highs while the number of convictions for rape are at an historic low. Neither can we ignore the grim developments in the United States where a wholesale attack is under way on abortion rights.

Congress, this cannot be allowed to continue. It is clearly no longer enough to have access to legal abortion in certain circumstances. Our law needs to stop the criminalisation of all of the women. This motion calls on our union to throw its weight behind the campaign to change the law. Abortion Rights, along with other organisations like the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, are campaigning to reform the laws so that all women in Britain, like women in Ireland, and France, are free from criminalisation when they have to make such a difficult personal decision. This motion calls on us to work with Abortion Rights with whom we already are affiliated and support the campaign to modernise the legal framework within which abortions take place and bring our outdated laws in line with the best modern medical and legal guidelines. It calls on our union to promote this campaign among our branches and urge them to affiliate to Abortion Rights. I ask you to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, William. A seconder?

TARANJIT CHANA (London): Congress, the archaic 1861 law on abortion must urgently be reformed and overhauled. Abortion is healthcare and should not be criminalised. We must not be prosecuted. We must have access to safe procedures and recognise our vulnerabilities with compassion and not condemnation. The impact of increased police investigations and state surveillance is detrimental to all women and girls. This is confirmed by the World Health Organisation that says that criminalising abortion has a negative impact on women's health and their human rights. Congress, safe, legal, free, and accessible abortion is a healthcare right. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. The mover of Motion 190?

## **OPPOSE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL MOTION 190**

### **190. OPPOSE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL**

This Congress moves to oppose the introduction of the Criminal Justice Bill. If passed, the Criminal Justice Bill would mean people who are homeless in England and Wales could face fines or even prison for 'so-called' nuisance rough sleeping.

The Bill says someone could be considered a 'nuisance' if they sleep in a doorway, if they have 'excessive smell, or even if they simply look like they are intending to sleep rough. The GMB has a proud history of supporting the community and the plight of those rough sleeping and facing homelessness. The Bill would criminalise and dehumanise those of us who have been failed by the system that should keep all of us safe.

We should treat people who are homeless with dignity and humanity – not with the threat of police action.

This Congress adopts as policy it's opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill and reiterates its commitment to supporting the most vulnerable people in society.

### **Y10 YORK GENERAL. North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Carried)*

MARY BELL (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, this is my first time as a delegate - *(Applause)* - and the first time speaking to an audience such as this, so please bear with me. It is my most fervent hope that on July 4<sup>th</sup> we will say goodbye to this dreadful Tory government and their plan to bring in the truly horrendous Criminal Justice Bill. Just in case every poll is wrong, I think it is so important that we at the GMB say clearly that we will not stand by and let this Bill become law. I am so passionate about this issue, not only because I believe in treating everyone with dignity and respect, but also because I have personal family experience of homelessness, why it so often happens, and how it impacts on families and communities. The Criminal Justice Bill seeks to criminalise homelessness. Can you imagine such a policy, a policy that targets people who have nowhere to live, often no job, and then we arrest them for being homeless, fine them, and then throw them into prison when they cannot pay the fine. Homelessness is a very complex issue. So many things contribute towards this but at the core it is the Government's responsibility. There are simply not the services, the homes, or the support to help people in their recovery, support them to reconnect with families, and to help them to navigate the process of finding accommodation and employment. This is all part of a wider issue due to the chronic lack of funding of the NHS, and services within our communities being cut back, which all goes towards these people not just slipping through the net but literally being thrown into it by government that does not care. We cannot stand by and wash our hands of these vulnerable people. I have personally done training to support drug users and the homeless. I have worked directly with these individuals. They do not need dragging up in front of a

magistrate or out of a doorway or off a bench, they need compassionate intervention. Honestly, I do not think any decent human being has really thought this through. How can anyone with a heart think about doing this, let alone adding it to the statute book as law. As someone who has acted as an appropriate adult for young people because they did not have the support of anyone who cares, I know exactly how hard it is to break the cycle. Because I have lived it I cannot stand by and watch other families go through this. The trade union Movement has a proud record of playing our part in keeping our communities together. In my area, the unions played a central part in our mining communities. Although today is a different time, and we have different workplaces, we should still play that wider role in our communities. Whilst I hope we will see the end of this Bill along with this Government, Congress, I hope that you will support this motion.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Well done. Secunder? Formally. Thank you. The mover of Motion 192?

## **HILLSBOROUGH LAW NOW MOTION 192**

### **192. HILLSBOROUGH LAW NOW**

This Congress supports Hillsborough Law Now. Hillsborough Law Now is a vital campaign, which if enshrined in law will provide justice to the families of victims at Hillsborough, as well as those who tragically lost loved ones in the Grenfell Tower disaster, anyone who suffered irreversible health implications as a result of the Blood Contamination scandal of the 1970s and 80s, those who lost friends and family due to the governments mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic, Nuclear Test veterans, and countless other victims of injustice.

The law is immensely important to the North-West & Irish region but will benefit the whole country if brought into practice. The law will give bereaved families better access to money for legal representation at inquests, creating a level playing field. As well as put in place a duty of candour on all police officers and public officials, alongside adopting a charter for families bereaved through public tragedy which would be binding on all public bodies. Also, it would require that evidence and findings of major inquests be taken fully into account at subsequent criminal trials. Clarify in law that major inquiries commissioned by the government or other official bodies constitute "courses of public justice". Last but not least, make it a requirement for criminal trials following a major inquest to take place in a court with relevant expertise and status, rather than crown court.

We ask that Congress supports this motion, and that GMB:

- Pledge financial support to the Hillsborough Law Now campaign.
- Promote and encourage all staff, activists, and members to participate in any campaign events, demonstrations etc.
- Invite members of the campaign to speak at suitable GMB regional and national meetings.

## **M35 MISCELLANEOUS BRANCH North West & Irish Region**

*(Carried)*

PAUL RICHARDS (North West & Irish): Congress, President, I stand here today to urge this Congress to support the Hillsborough Law Now campaign. This campaign is not just about justice for the victims of the Hillsborough tragedy, it is also about justice for all those who have suffered from injustices. Hillsborough Law Now seeks to enshrine in law the right of the families who lost loved ones in the Hillsborough and Grenfell Tower disasters, the victims of the blood contamination scandal in the 1970s and '80s, those who have lost friends and family due to the mishandling of the Covid 2019 Pandemic, nuclear test veterans, and countless others who have been victims of injustice.

This law is hugely important to the North West & Irish Region but its impact will be felt across the country. If passed this law will provide bereaved families better access to money for legal representation at inquests creating a level playing field in their pursuit of justice. Hillsborough Law Now will also put in place a duty of candour on all police officers and public officials. It will drop the charge of families bereaved through public tragedy which will be binding on all public bodies. Also it will require evidence and findings of major inquests to be fully taken into account at criminal trials. Finally, it will make a requirement for criminal trials following a major inquest to take place in a court with relevant expertise and status rather than a Crown Court.

Therefore, I urge Congress to support this motion and I call upon the GMB to: (1) pledge financial support to the Hillsborough Law Now campaign; (2) promote and encourage all staff and activists and members to take part in any campaigns, events, demonstrations, etc.; and (3) invite members of the campaign to speak at the GMB regional and national meetings. Let's stand in a pursuit of justice for all those who the system has wronged. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Paul.

BILLY GOULDING (North West & Irish) seconding Motion 192. Congress, the previous speaker, Paul, has explained why the Hillsborough Law Now is so vital that it needs to be brought into practice now and enshrined in law. It will be a help to all those families who have suffered in losing loved ones throughout the country and still fighting for justice for their loved ones. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Billy. Well done. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? No? In that case can I ask Elaine Daley on behalf of the CEC to come to the rostrum, please.

ELAINE DALEY (CEC): I am responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 189, 190 and 192. The CEC is supporting all these motions with qualifications.

On Motion 189 GMB has strong existing policy on access to pregnancy termination including affiliation to Abortion Rights. This motion goes further to call for the removal of pregnancy termination from criminal law. We support this call. Our small qualification is that as the law differs in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, GMB regions would be best placed to take action.

On Motion 190, the measures in the Criminal Justice Bill effectively to criminalise rough sleeping are cruel and should be robustly opposed. The Bill is wide ranging and includes stronger action to tackle a number of serious crimes. It also includes a duty of care for police officers in line with recommendations following the Hillsborough Disaster. Therefore, our qualification is that Congress states the opposition to the specific measures around homelessness in the Bill, not the Bill in its entirety.

GMB is committed to continue the fight for justice for those who died at Hillsborough. The abhorrent way in which families and communities have been treated must never happen again.

On Motion 192, the CEC small qualification is that the call for financial support for the Hillsborough Law Now campaign needs to be considered by the CEC's Finance & General Purposes Committee. This is in line with longstanding practice.

Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 189, 190 and 192, with the qualifications that I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elaine. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 189? (*Agreed*) Does North East, Yorkshire, & Humber, accept the qualification on Motion 190? (*Agreed*) Does North West & Irish accept the qualification on Motion 192? (*Agreed*)

The CEC is supporting Composite 11, so I will put that to the vote. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Composite 11 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 189 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 189 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 190 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 190 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 192, please show. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 192 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Before I call the next speaker can I ask movers and seconders of Motion 42 and 43 to be ready, please.

## **SPEAKER: CAMMELL LAIRD**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we are proud to stand in support of campaigns for justice, like the ones you have heard in the motions today. This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1984 Cammell Laird strike in Merseyside, which brought about a long-standing GMB campaign for justice, led by our members in North West & Irish Region. I wish to invite Neil Smith from North West & Irish Region to speak to Congress about the Justice for Cammell Laird's 37<sup>th</sup> campaign. *(Applause)*

NEIL SMITH (North West & Irish): President and Congress, I'm Neil Smith, political officer for the North West & Irish Region and very proud to be there.

I have come to speak to you today about an issue that is very important, not just to the GMB Congress over the years but also to our region. Our region is proud to fight campaigns for justice, as the President has just stated, justice for our members at work but also for our members attacked for defending their right to work, to be who they are and to be treated with dignity and respect by those with power and accountability. For many years we have held a 'Justice' conference in the region, giving voice and support to working class people across the UK and Ireland who have been subject to the worst attacks on their rights and their communities.

Forty years ago this year our members working at Cammell Laird Shipyard in Merseyside were attacked for defending their right to work. GMB research has found that the Thatcher Government wanted to close the yard, which was denied at the time, and to take on our union to set an example to the miners, who were on strike, and that if you fight privatisation you get punished. Faced with imminent job losses our members took strike action and had no other option but to occupy their place of work, which was not uncommon at the time. They were arrested and jailed for a month in a high security prison. They were denied a proper trial and convicted in their absence, losing their pension and redundancy rights. For years after they experienced blacklisting and financial hardship as a result of their treatment. The strikers, led by Eddie Marnell, have continued to campaign against this miscarriage of justice for many years and for the truth behind their brutal treatment. Sadly, too many have passed away without seeing the justice they deserve. On this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary the fight goes on. We want to pay tribute to the strikers and, in particular, to Eddie Marnell, who sadly couldn't be here this year at Congress. Thanks to Eddie's determination over many years and the support shown by you, Congress, GMB is continue the campaign against this miscarriage of justice.

The strikers always knew their convictions were a stitch up, and GMB is supporting new research efforts into why it should have been null and void from the start. This will inform our campaign, backed by Congress, to seek a judicial review into the decision which led to the 37 being wrongfully jailed. To do that we need the truth wherever we can find it. GMB action in 2022 secured a commitment from the Labour Party that when in power it will release Government documents that are held that relate to these prosecutions and carry out a review into the jailing of striking workers. This year, the Labour conference will, once again, be held in Liverpool, overlooking the shipyard

where this all began. The GMB trade union will be making sure that Labour oppose that commitment in government and that it delivers on the justice denied for far too long. No struggle is ever forgotten, especially Cammell Laird. So I ask Congress that we please show our solidarity and support for Eddie Marnell and the Cammell Laird's 37. Thank you very much. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Neil, for speaking on that. As you said, it may be 40 years but the fight goes on. Please take our good wishes and solidarity back to Eddie. It is a shame that he couldn't be with us this week as well.

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

THE PRESIDENT: That moves us on to motions under Union Organisation, Education & Training. Could I have the mover of Motion 42, please.

### **MANDATORY EDI TRAINING FOR ALL GMB STAFF & REPRESENTATIVES MOTION 42**

#### **42. MANDATORY EDI TRAINING FOR ALL GMB STAFF & REPRESENTATIVES**

This Congress, we would like to recognize that hate crimes and discrimination is still alive and kicking in our society. Where we may think being part of GMB makes us immune in reality this is not the case.

Where a lot of us may join campaigns and march to highlight discrimination and equality not all members get involved or even jump on the band wagon. There is still a lot of unconscious bias amongst Officers and representatives based on where they are brought up or their environment. There is, and we need to be honest, some that turn a blind eye due to lack of understanding or ignorance.

Hate crime is about not recognising equality and treating people differently. There are still people out there that think, women, people of a different race, LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities are not equal to them.

Unconscious bias is still a major issue and most of us may still come across this with family, friends, colleagues or neighbours who use inappropriate language and feel uncomfortable saying something to them.

In 2024 GMB needs to follow suite like a lot of organizations up and down the UK where EDI (Equality Diversity and Inclusion) Training is mandatory for the managers, supervisors, and anyone dealing with staff. GMB and any other union is not above this as we all know some representatives only become reps for their personal gains.

Mandatory EDI Training for current and newly appointed officers and reps should be part of the GMB mandate.

### **L27 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF.BRANCH North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region**

*(Withdrawn)*

ATU HASHIM EQUIANO (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, I move Motion 42: Mandatory EDI training for all GMB staff and representatives. I am speaking without the support of the region.

Congress, this motion is not about targeting any individuals who we know. It is simply about moving with modern times and recognising society and the climate we live in daily. No one is saying that GMB doesn't have an equality drive and policy, but so do many organisations. Many organisations have mandatory EDI training, even though for decades they have an equality and inclusion policy. But it is not presumed that GMB is immuned from this type of training. No organisation is perfect.

Equality, diversity and inclusion is an important concept in today's ever-changing world. It goes beyond a mere "nice to have" and plays a crucial role in our organisational success. Let me break it down for you. Equality, which refers to ensuring fair treatment, equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of their background characteristics in all circumstances. Diversity encompasses a right of human differences, including not only limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and social economic status. Inclusion involves creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and included.

EDI training equips individuals and organisations with the knowledge and skills to identify specific challenges relating to EDI within their organisation, to take practical steps to overcome these challenges, to create psychologically safe environments, and evaluate people's practices to ensure that workforce representatives reflect and communicate with the organisations they operate in. This includes inequalities using data-driven insights of current matters that arise leading to hate or discrimination. A lot of us may join campaigns and march highlighting discrimination and inequalities, but not all members are involved. There is still a lot of unconscious bias in our country, which is part of this training and helps GMB in dealing with it.

There are still people in this country who think women, people of different races, LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities are not equal. In 2024 GMB needs to follow suite like a lot of organisations up and down the UK where EDI training is mandatory for all managers, supervisors and those in any leadership roles. EDI goes beyond legal obligations and comprises ethical and morale standards. It is about creating an environment where every individual feels, safe, valued and empowered to reach their full potential. Congress, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

ALEEKE ANDERSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, everyone. I am seconding Motion 42. Yesterday we heard from our National President, Barbara Plant, during her speech mention the racist and vile video that revealed the continuous existence of racism in our union. I thank Barbara for clearly saying that wherever racism shows its head in this union we will confront and tackle it. Equality isn't just about racism within the GMB. It's about harassment, assault and overall mistreatment within



the GMB that affects everyone, so not only the victims and perpetrators but also their families and people who witness it as well.

We, as a union, represent people from all over the globe, from multiple races, disabilities, ages and religions, and the faith that you believe in should be the symbol leading by example to protect all employees, members and people that affects them. It is not about people from different faiths, as anyone from any background can be mistreated. The call for mandatory EDI training should be welcomed by everyone as everyone has unconscious bias. Being aware of it is the only way that we can check ourselves.

The Equality Act came on the statute book in 2010 and it is 2024 now. Obviously, not much has changed because we are still experiencing the same issues and they keep on increasing every year. Yes, the GMB has equality training available but it is not mandatory for people to take it. In the same way that GDPR is mandatory for our staff, which is reviewed and done every year, I call for EDI training to be at least the same or better as the world we live in changes every day and we should do better and be better not only for ourselves but for employees as well.

Congress, unfortunately, this motion wasn't submitted correctly. Well, it was but it was changed, so unfortunately we will be withdrawing this motion so thank you for listening. *(Applause)* Going forward, we will address this matter with our regional secretary and our national officer with the issues that we have raised. We just want to make sure that everyone gets a fair chance. Thank you for your time. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Aleeke. I call Motion 43.

## **TRAINING OF WORKPLACE REPS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS MOTION 43**

### **43. TRAINING OF WORKPLACE REPS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS**

This Congress believes that the current model of training carried out by the GMB in developing new workplace reps is over reliant on block release and is no longer appropriate to cater for the challenges of the modern workforce.

The GMB rep's curriculum is 20 days or more, and this is a burden to members without facility time and is a disproportionate burden on those with family commitments more usually women.

Workers who are able to take paid time off in the private sector to attend training are very rare indeed. Many of our organised workplaces do not have adequate facility time agreements. We require training that caters for this group of workers alongside workers in the gig economy and all patterns of work. This could include evenings, weekends and the use of technology used so successfully during the pandemic.

Congress calls on the CEC to carry out an urgent and thorough review and then implement the changes required to enable all our members the opportunities to become trained reps and ambassadors of our GMB Union at Work.

## **X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH**

### **London Region**

*(Carried)*

DAVE LEVY (London): Vice President and Congress, I am moving Motion 43. We have a very disparate branch. We have, as far as we know, more than 250 workplaces for different employers and a membership per workplace of between two and five, depending on your definition of average. Finding reps is hard and making them is hard, and this motion asks for an easier complete training programme. This motion is not designed to be a criticism of current provision or of personnel involved in training delivery. It is meant to be an expression of insight about our unusual but not unique organisational structure. This is why we accept the qualification issued by the CEC, to recognise the block-release system used within the union is appropriate and successful and we would not want to see it abandoned where it works. There is no interpretation in the original writing of the motion, so we are pleased with the qualification that has been issued by the CEC.

We are, however, that the high training barrier to entry to becoming a rep is in some places and for some people an inhibition to organisational success. That is of the union and of those individuals. We think we can do better.

Our organisational issues are compounded by the union's requirements that we will not train or recognise health and safety reps only. To force management to set up a health and safety committee we need two people. To win a recognition agreement we need 50% of the workforce. Our failure to create accredited health and safety reps means that we may be missing a trick. We also believe that the high training barrier to entry may discriminate against women and disabled members. In this post-monogon world, again, we should look to do better. If you are not a rep you are unlikely to be considered suitable to stand for the regional council, which is itself a further gateway to positions of leadership within our union.

This motion asks the CEC to look at our training strategies and programmes and to make them more suitable a modern nomadic workforce, to make them more family-friendly, easier to provide a work-life balance and to split the training and accreditation for our health and safety reps and workplace organisers.

However, we are not prescribing an answer here. We are pleased that, finally, the CEC is agreed to support the qualification and hope that we can rapidly do better. The central call in this motion is for an investigation for the development of solutions to the problems which this motion identifies. Please support it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Secunder?

GARY RUSSELL (London): President and Congress, I second Motion 43: Training of Workplace Reps and Health and Safety Reps. Not all workplaces have recognition or agreements. The gig economy is a large and growing sector. One in six adults in the UK

currently work a gig job at least one day a week, and almost half of gig workers in the UK have full-time jobs. In fact the figure is 48%. Gig economy workers contribute about £20 billion to the UK economy each year and it is expected to rise to more £60 billion in 2026.

Health and safety is a vital role for all reps. Not having the training is a shortfall. If the reps were fully trained, this would, potentially, reduce the amount of work-related accidents. In 2022/23 there were about half-a-million work-related accidents that were reported to the Health & Safety Executive and more than 50,000 were reported under RIDDOR. More than 35 million days of work were lost last year at an estimated cost of just under £4 billion. A reduction in these figures would mean profits for the companies which, potentially, would lead to an increase in pay rises. Please support this motion and give the reps the tools they need to carry out their duties. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Would anyone like to speak in opposition? *(No response)* In that case, I will call Sue Walker to give the CEC response.

SUE WALKER (CEC): President and Congress, I am responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 42 and 43. The CEC is asking for Motion 42 to be withdrawn. The CEC agrees that equality, diversity and inclusion training can be an important tool. We recognise that a number of training programmes are being rolled out and developed for GMB staff and representatives. However, we cannot substantiate the claim in the motion that there are GMB officers who “turn a blind eye due to a lack of understanding or ignorance”. Nor the motion’s statement that quotes “we all know some representatives only become reps for their personal gains”.

We acknowledge that unconscious bias affects everyone and that our reps regularly go above and beyond the call of duty to support our members. Every union can and should do better to eliminate bias and commit to tackling discrimination, and in that the GMB has made great strides.

We have created the Women’s Campaign Unit, the National Race Organising Team and the GRASP programme. The National Race Officer and Women’s Campaign Unit have developed joint presentations available to all officers and reps addressing race and gender in equality within an organising and campaigning framework. The National Race Officer is also delivering a GMB-centric anti-racism training package for all lay members and employees in accordance with Dr Elizabeth Henry’s recommendations. This is while also supporting our other leadership programmes, the new Officers’ Leadership Academy and Women in Leadership.

The CEC is supporting Motion 43 with a qualification. We support the spirit of this motion to improve the access that atypical workers have to our activist training. Our qualification is that GMB should not abandon the model of paid release for our representatives where we have recognition. The wording of this motion could be interpreted as such. The CEC believes that we should also be confronting discrimination in relation to paid release. We also wish to refute the claim that GMB’s training is over reliant on block release. GMB is currently organising and training

activists who work for some of the most anti-union employers in modern history, proving our adaptability in our reps' training.

Therefore, the CEC is asking for Motion 42 to be withdrawn and that Congress should support Motion 43 with the qualifications outlined. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber agree to withdraw Motion 42?

A DELEGATE: Can we have the right to reply

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Ok

ATU HASHIM EQUIANO: Congress, I need to reply to what was said in the response by the CEC. The CEC has taken a stance asking Congress to withdraw Motion 42, and they are entitled to do that. As a person of colour and disabled, I have seen over 60 years of discrimination. I thought, as a trade unionist, my fellow comrades would support me especially after seeing that awful video targeting the race nominee that continues to be circulated on X.

Educating ourselves about all forms of discrimination and bigotry would be a priority within our union. Regardless of what it says in the booklet, I know that 99.9% of the reps joined GMB for the right reason. Please do not be thrown about with misinterpretation of a booklet you are reading. Dr Henry's report may cover elements of discrimination but how many people have read the report, let alone how many of our members know about it? It took us 20 years to start work on the recommendations. In no way am I saying, or have ever said, that GMB officers turn a blind eye, so that is misleading, about discrimination. I am saying that people out *there* do not see equality as a priority, but the effects of equality is a responsibility to us all. Many members I know are shocked about the decision that the GMB has taken to withdraw this motion. Educating ourselves ----

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can you wind up, please?

ATU HASHIM EQUIANO: I will. Educating ourselves should never be a barrier but a bonus to GMB. As new issues come up, we need to be a pioneer. I am asking the CEC to reconsider their stance about withdrawing this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does London accept the qualification on Motion 43? *(Agreed)* Thank you. All those in favour of 43? Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 42 was WITHDRAWN.*

*Motion 43 was CARRIED.*

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

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call Motion 39.

## **EQUIPPING REPS TO SUPPORT BETTER WORKPLACE MENTAL ILL HEALTH MOTION 39**

### **39. EQUIPPING REPS TO SUPPORT BETTER WORKPLACE MENTAL ILL HEALTH**

This Congress notes there is a great amount of difficulty experienced by our workplace reps dealing with workplace sickness support. This is exponentially affected and, anecdotally in my workplace, reps feel even more out of their depth and unsupported when the issues concern mental ill health, neurodiversity or behavioural issues. The increasing prevalence of conditions and complexity of, often overlapping, symptoms and the variety of severity of effects they may have can be overwhelming, leading to feelings of failure among reps in what they perceive as an absence of knowledge and understanding.

This Congress believes that understanding mental health and neurodiversity, recognising behavioural issues, being aware of the language and vocabulary needed to effectively discuss and debate the issues in work and identifying the range of detriments, potential solutions and adjustments is key to the effective workplace rep's toolkit within the context of the increasing prevalence of these unseen illnesses. We believe that it is vital for our reps to be enabled to understand the impact on performance and productivity of a workplace not seeing and not understanding the issues, of not determining and providing adjustments to enable these members to attend work and complete their roles to the best of their abilities, preventing a wealth of skills and talents being overlooked and lost.

This Congress resolves to develop and provide a nationally supported training package that will be flexible to be delivered either in existing training packages, in new courses or through branches and provide detailed information on various mental health conditions and neurodivergent conditions, explaining their nature, prevalence and potential impact on individuals in the workplace. Equip representatives with the ability to recognise and understand behavioural issues associated with mental health and neurodiversity, emphasising the importance of destigmatising these issues. Cover the spectrum of detriments experienced by individuals, from minor impacts to severe issues, stressing the diverse nature of mental health and neurodiversity. Train representatives in effective communication strategies to facilitate open and supportive discussions about mental health and neurodiversity in the workplace. Ensure that representatives are familiar in the legal framework, especially the Equality Act, specifically in terms of mental health conditions and neurodivergent conditions, from discrimination in the workplace. Identify and develop, where gaps are found, workplace representative resources that support their ability to effectively represent individual members with mental health or neurodivergent conditions. Grounding them in real-life situations including case studies and practical scenarios provided by representatives with hands-on experience of dealing with mental health, neurodiversity and behavioural issues.

Continue and develop the discussion, nationally and regionally of how mental health and neurodivergent conditions can impact an individual's work performance, including potential challenges and strengths that neurodiverse individuals may bring to the workplace. Identifying and disseminating the promotion of an inclusive and stigma-free workplace culture, emphasising the importance of fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their mental health and neurodiversity. Identifying good practice and guidance on determining and implementing reasonable adjustments to support employees with mental health or neurodivergent conditions, ensuring that representatives understand the process and legal obligations.

**A02 AMBULANCE BRANCH  
Midlands Region**

(Carried)

SIMON DAY (Midlands): Congress, I am the branch secretary of West Midlands Ambulance Branch, moving Motion 39: Equipping Reps to Support Better Workplace Mental Ill Health. We know that the prevalence and incidents of mental ill health has been frantically on the increase over the last few years. Covid provided fuel for the fire and the cost-of-living crisis has poured petrol on top of that making a bad situation much worse.

We recognise and applaud the work is doing to equip reps to work effectively in their workplaces and support their members but, perhaps because we are Ambulance Service staff, we want more. For the last few years in our branch we have seen our reps face a learning curve that has been so steep that they have sometimes felt that they are holding on by their fingertips alone, and I am sure we are not an outlier.

Other factors involved in the stresses have been captured in an article this morning in the *Mirror online* highlighting the issue of ambulance delays. One in four ambulance workers have stated that they have witnessed the death of a patient as a direct result of these delays. Almost half of our members in the survey said that they had experienced waiting outside of an A&E department for their entire shift. There have been harrowing stories of our members finding patients dead on their arrival at the scene, members being the recipients of verbal and physical attacks as a direct result of these delays that are completely out of their control. As you can imagine, this leads to a heightened level of unhealthy stress in the workplace. Again, I suggest that workplace stress is not solely found in the Ambulance Service. Unbelievable waits for consultations, assessments and treatment plans, which in turn create barriers in sickness-management processes play their part in worsening the whole issue, as does employers treating mental ill health like an individual's lack of resilience and disability like an illness. Employers are failing time and time again in their duty of care towards our members.

Hardworking and established reps alike have felt insecure and under-supported in this fast-flowing and constantly changing tide. Training and education must not just be about competence but also about confidence. It is about starting where the learner is in providing a context in which both competence and confidence can be developed.

This motion calls for a national flexible and strategic approach to supporting reps to respond to mental health issues in their workplaces, to develop and provide a flexible training package that can be delivered in existing training packages, such as *GMB at Work* or in newly developed focus courses, packages that can be responsive and flexible delivering courses nationally, regionally and in branches, helping branches to assist their reps to meet their members' needs. We must use these vehicles to promote, disseminate and build on identified good practices that enables reps to develop inclusive, stigma-free workplaces that challenge discriminatory employers at every opportunity. Congress, I request that you support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. Secunder?

IAN BURTON (Midlands): Congress and President, I am the branch president of the East Midlands Ambulance Branch in the Midlands Region. I am speaking in support of and to second Motion 39.

GMB reps have a fantastic reputation. They are trusted by so many of the staff in the workplace for lots of different reasons; the support and advice, the guidance we give and the knowledge that we have, just to name a few. Employers have a duty of care for their staff when it comes to mental health support for sure, but considering that the managers and the HR departments are not really trusted by the staff who work there, just who are the staff going to turn to for support? Well, they come to their great and trusted GMB representatives in the workplace. Mental ill health is a GMB issue and we owe it to all our members to have reps that have a good level of training and awareness, not to provide therapy or treatment but who can recognise these issues and refer or signpost, and who are not afraid to normalise the discussions that can take place that will support our colleagues to get the help they need. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. I call the mover of Motion 40.

## **1 DAY'S TRAINING FOR POTENTIAL REPS MOTION 40**

### **40. 1 DAY'S TRAINING FOR POTENTIAL REPS**

This Congress is called upon to invite all potential reps to one day's training. We need to be open and honest and inform them what is expected of them in their important role. This training would replace the initial Shop Steward training, therefore saving the union time and money. We could hold the one-day course before the GMB@Work course takes place.

We suggest relevant Officers and Branch Officers would be in attendance – clarifying the role of a GMB Rep and what is expected of them. Are they suited to the role? What support is given from GMB to our reps would be an integral part of the day's course. It is important to inform all of the individual policies that their companies operate and important for the reps to familiarise themselves with the procedures.

We need to ensure that our members receive the best representation. It is imperative that the reps are committed and comfortable in that role. It is far better to explore this rather than go through all of the GMB@Work training only to find that later they realise the role is not for them.

We will always encourage and offer support to reps who are focused and committed to the role.

## **A17 ASDA BRANCH Midlands Region**

*(Lost)*

ALAN DUDSON (Midlands): Congress, I move Motion 40: 1 Day's Training for Potential Reps. We call upon this Congress to support an initial one day's training for all new potential reps. The aim of this is for them to fully understand exactly what the role of a rep consists of. You all know, as you are stewards, senior stewards and convenors that collective bargaining is fantastic. When you have you are singularly negotiating and

you've got an officer with you the scenario is okay. When you've got to go in on your own it can be a frightening experience because some of these gaffers who you meet during the day are happy family people of a night, but when you go into negotiate with them without any help you wonder why they haven't been registered under the Dangerous Dogs Act. *(Laughter and applause)*

What we are asking for is to get them in, see how tough they are, see if we can get them on a SAS course for a week, educate them and rough them up a bit. We feel that if they are okay and they fit into the category we need – rough, tough and don't stand any muck, if you want to put it that way – and they fit into the lifestyle of union reps, this would save time and money for our union, as only reps who can fully commit to the role will then go on to attend the 10 day *GMB at Work* course. Congress, please support. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. Seconder?

KAREN MORRELL (Midlands): Congress, I second Motion 40. Vice President and Congress, I wholeheartedly agree with my colleague, even down to the Dangerous Dogs Act. I thought that was really apt. I would like to say that the initial support training will be carried out on the same day as the proposed one-day training. This will also provide a great opportunity for branch officials and officers to meet potential reps and address their concerns or issues. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. I call the mover of Motion 41.

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE MOTION 41**

### **41. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE**

This Congress believes that advances in artificial intelligence brings promise of both great benefits and great threats.

With employers rapidly embracing this technology and looking to establish policies and procedures for its use, our representatives need education and guidance in order to maximise benefits and minimise its risks to members' jobs and terms and conditions.

We call upon the CEC to work with our Education Officers to provide necessary training to best prepare us for this ever-changing world of AI. You know it makes sense!

### **L50 LEICESTER WATER BRANCH Midlands Region**

*(Carried)*

JASON EVANS (Midlands): Congress, I move Motion 41: Artificial Intelligence. Applications of artificial intelligence are increasing daily at fast speed. Only two weeks ago the stock value of Nvidia, the American chip maker, has outstripped the total value of the entire UK FTSE 100 Index. As governments, corporations and institutions all clamour to take advantage of what AI has to offer, the application of AI is, doubtless, able to bring benefits. For example, recently it was publicised that AI had helped to



increase accurate diagnosis of breast cancer cases by over 12% as it can recognise indicators which humans may miss. However, AI does pose serious threats to jobs involving repetitive tasks, data analysis and administration, in particular.

This motion purely asks for our reps to be best informed and prepared to ensure that our members' privacy, diversity and their livelihoods are protected. Our education courses are improving all the time and we can, surely, incorporate improved awareness of AI into the courses that we already run. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jason. Secunder?

CHRISTOPHER ROCHE (Midlands): Congress, I am seconding Motion 41. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* As always we need to ensure that our members and reps are the best informed to deal with the challenges in the workplace and beyond. Artificial intelligence can be a force for good but also it poses serious threat to the employment terms and conditions and personal privacy. Please support this motion to help us handle this. You know it makes sense. I am sorry I have to say this: You know it! Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. I call Motion 44.

## **GMB TRAINING -EMPLOYER'S ENTERING INSOLVENCY PROCESSES MOTION 44**

### **44. GMB TRAINING – EMPLOYER'S ENTERING INSOLVENCY PROCESSES**

This Congress notes that training provided or available to GMB activists and workplace representatives currently includes no information on the technical differences in the processes of receiving statutory rights and payments between a solvent and insolvent employer.

This Congress believes that the lack of an immediate on demand course or information pack available to both officers and activists hinders a timely response can add to the uncertainty and concern of our membership around potential outcomes at best and at worst leads to a situation where incorrect information is provided based upon the law as applicable to a solvent business.

This Congress resolves that the GMB should create and maintain a short briefing session and associated resources outlining the role of The Insolvency Service in making payments via The Redundancy Payments Service and statutory differences, for example Statutory Notice Pay Compensation being claimed at the end of the Statutory Notice Pay period and subject to deductions, as opposed to Pay in Lieu of Notice being paid in the final pay packet with no benefits deductions. This should be delivered to all relevant GMB activists and officers when an employer they deal with enters an insolvency process.

## **W47 WILKINSONS BRANCH Southern Region**

*(Carried)*

DAVID BARTLETT (Southern): Vice President and Congress, I am moving Motion 44: GMB Training – Employer's Entering Insolvency Processes.

The GMB has an extensive in-house training programme which is routinely delivered to activists following the most common issues of industrial relations and health and safety with other courses, such as TUPE and redundancy available on demand. However, following the experience of reps at Wilco and Wiggle it is clear, of course, that an associated resource is deliverable at short notice at short notice does not exist for activists within all regions when their employer enters an insolvency process. This must change.

The reality is that when your employer appoints an administrator or a liquidator things are immediately uncertain, fast paced and changeable. You fear for your job and the jobs of your membership, whilst facing an unknown system and future. You deal with administrators or liquidators as opposed to your employer, the insolvency practitioners' primary focus being on securing as much capital for creditors as possible rather than preserving the business, jobs or considering member welfare. In many cases, such agents won't follow established processes and may disregard certain aspects of employment law due to the amount saved outweighing the financial cost of compliance. In addition to this, you have the issues of supporting members who are likely to be dismissed at various points throughout the process. Their redundancy pay needs claiming from the government. Notice pay compensation is subject to deductions and can't be claimed until the end of the notional notice period. To top it all off, they might have even been paid any outstanding wages and accrued holiday pay.

Then there is the questions from members: "Is there any legal recourse? Does it apply to all of us equally? What are you doing? What is the union going to do?" The answer is "Possibly not as we need to seek advice and we will come back to you". But these questions do not stop. Congress, we, as a union, must value our activists and ensure the support, training and resources are available at a time of such significant turmoil for the activists and their membership. We require the education, policy, research and legal departments to develop and maintain a comprehensive training programme deliverable for reps and officers on day one of any insolvency process. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Seconder?

MEMTAZ KHAN (Southern): Good afternoon, President and Congress. I am seconding Motion 44: GMB Training – Employer's Entering Insolvency Processes. I'm a first-time speaker and a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* Wilco staff were hard hit with the sudden closure of all their sites. Staff dealt with the news that they would no longer have a job with major impacts on how they would suddenly support their families with no knowledge of how administration works. The type of things that staff face during a liquidization are stress of losing their job, employers not supporting staff or providing relevant information and employees worried about their future employment, ie, will they find another job, entitlement to redundancy depending on their service, which benefits are they entitled to and will their change in circumstances cover all their living costs? Employees were glad to be part of the GMB union who campaigned for their rights and

stood by their side through the whole process. The motion will better tool our reps and officers during a traumatic time. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mentaz. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition?

CONNOR FOGGIN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Connor Foggin, I am speaking in opposition to Motion 40. It is not so much in opposition to the motion itself, because I think the idea behind it is good, but the idea behind it is already in practice. When you are elected by the members within your workplace you should be inducted on a one-day training course with the regional officer. During that time, that regional officer will discuss with you what your role is. It is a little concerning if you believe that that is not happening. For me that should be happening and, realistically, it is good practice to have branch officers present, which we do within our branch when we recruit new reps. This is a process that is already in place so I am not entirely sure why there should need to be a motion to Congress. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Would the mover of Motion 40 like the right of reply?

ALAN DUDSON (Midlands): Yes. I don't know who the gentleman was, but I want to say that a day's training with an officer does put you in good stead to face some of the bastards who I've had to face. *(Cheers and applause)* An officer is there to help you, not to judge you. Your members pick you because they think you are of good standing and you will represent them. The reason why is because a lot of them ain't got the guts to take the job on themselves so they select someone to act on their behalf. That's all well and good. They've picked me and they've picked a lot of my friends, the lot that I'm sitting with now. You know yourself that it's a big learning curve from the day when they pat you on your head, and then you've got to meet some of the mongrels. If you saw them in the street you'd probably shoot them.

I've got to say this. It's just a pat on the head and a day's chat. It's lovely being in the union. It's great being here. It's great listening to all the arguments. I've gone through that learning curve. I tell you now that I've been retired 13 years and I can still look round at some of the nastiest people you could wish to ever meet. I've beaten them. I'll tell you what – I say this to my General Secretary – one person who hated me most has gone and I'm still here is a former regional secretary. I've got to tell you that I beat him. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. I will now call Carol Robertson to give the CEC response.

CAROL ROBERTSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am responding on behalf of the CEC in response to Motions 39, 40 and 41. The CEC is supporting Motion 39 with qualifications. We recognise the need for our reps to be supported to deliver excellent representations and support the intention of this motion. Our qualification is to highlight existing resources and recognise the ongoing work happening to strengthen

our training offered to new and existing reps and to recognise our limitations in providing and delivering training.

The Equality and Inclusion Department has existing resources and training focused on neurodiversity. The GMB's *Thinking Differently at Work: Neurodiversity in the Workplace* campaign shows that resources are available on the GMB's website for branches and regions. There is also existing training in place to cover the issues identified in the motion, and the training offered to reps can be more widely examined. We must also qualify that the GMB is not a specialist provider of mental health training, and our existing *Mental Health at Work Guides* forms the basis of our training materials on mental health.

The CEC is asking for Motion 40 to be referred. This motion addresses a serious issue with a very constructive proposal. However, by seeking to abolish the existing initial support meeting, it is against long-established GMB policy and procedure. If referred we can look at ways of piloting this type of training without abolishing the initial support training, which is a vital part of establishing a strong and supportive bond between new reps and their officer.

Finally, the CEC is supporting Motion 41. It is an important proposal with the qualification. The complexity of artificial intelligence or AI models represents a challenge to unions and managers alike. The Post Office Horizon scandal showed what can happen when computer systems are seen as being above fault and too big to fail. Our reps and members need the tools to challenge inappropriate use of AI. Our qualification is that the term "artificial intelligence" can refer to a huge variety of products and algorithms. The complexity and variety of these systems prevents training that will cover all eventualities. Alongside work within the union our members need new rights, including consultation so that inappropriate AI can be challenged on a selective basis as we set out in the 2022 *Special Report on the Future of Work*.

Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 39 with the qualification set out, for Motion 40 to be referred and for Motion 41 to be supported with the qualification set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carol. Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 39? *(Agreed)* Does Midlands agree to refer back on Motion 40? *(Call of "No")* No? Okay. That is fine. Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 41? *(Agreed)* The CEC is supporting Motion 44. All those in favour of Motion 39, please show? Any against? That is carried. It has not been agreed to refer Motion 40 back. So the CEC is asking you to vote against it. All those in favour of Motion 40, please show? All those against? That fell. All those in favour of Motion 41, please show? Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 44, please show? Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 39 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 40 was LOST.*

*Motion 41 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 44 was CARRIED.*

Social Policy: NHS & Health Issues

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call the mover of Motion 209.

## **ISSUES ARISING FROM PATIENT FLOW IN THE NHS MOTION 209**

### **209. ISSUES ARISING FROM PATIENT FLOW IN THE NHS**

This Congress notes that across the NHS a continuous patient flow model was brought into force.

The purpose of the model was to help with the added pressures at Accident and Emergency with the need to move patients into the receiving wards.

The continuous flow model from the receiving wards are then moving a patient to a ward which has no bed and no area that a patient can wait until the bed becomes available. This means that each ward has an extra patient with nowhere to go, and is this safe?

What does this mean to the ward staff? patients not having a bed, sitting in an area in the ward that is not appropriate, there is no privacy for the patient.

How can we ensure our patients are safe and is the continuous flow the best answer?

**We ask congress to support all NHS staff.**

To raise awareness with the NHS to look for a way that NHS patients are safe.

To lobby parliament to get the help that is needed for the staff to make sure all NHS patients are safe in their care.

## **S11 – SCOTTISH PRIMARY CARE NURSING GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

MELANIE GALE (GMB Scotland): Congress, I move Motion 209: Issues Arising from Patient Flow in the NHS. Across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde a continuous flow model was brought in about a year ago. The reason for this model was to help the pressures in Accident & Emergency and being able to move the patients on to the receiving wards. The continuous flow from the receiving wards was that one patient was to be moved to many different wards. This was under discussions with bed managers, the receiving wards and wards being made aware of patients coming. It never happens, which means that each ward has one extra patient or two. The reason was that with the pressures on Accident & Emergency you need to be able to move on for these patients. But then what does that mean to our ward staff? It means patients not having a bed, sitting in an area of a ward that is not appropriate and many of our patients are actually sitting beside a window with no screen, no dignity and no privacy.

How can we ensure that our patients are safe, and is the continuous flow the best answer? Many patients coming through the doors are really quite unwell and finding a suitable patient to be able to do a continuous flow model is not always there. I am going to give you some examples of what is going on at the present moment. Recently, on the wards that I have been working on, patients have been transferred, not being able to sit up, coming through in a bed and stuck in the middle of a room with six other patients. They might mean sole care, they may need to go to the bathroom but there are no screens to provide this for them. We also had a palliative patient who was wheeled and put into a treatment room. Would you accept that for your family member? Would you be happy with that, because I'm not? And I'm a nurse! We also had a patient being brought through who needed a blood transfusion. He was made to sit in a chair for seven hours waiting for a blood transfusion because we had nowhere to put him. Where is the dignity for our patients? There are so many legal implications to this, especially in the patient flow across Scotland.

Our Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 comes in right away because, yet again, when are you able to take your patients to the toilet? The Patients' Right in Scotland Act of 2011 refers to the dignity and privacy of the patient. Where is it? For the staff, and especially the nurses, our NMC has been compromised by this. Practice effectively? Not a chance. Preserved safety? No. Promote professionalism and trust? As we putting trust in our patients? No.

Is patient flow actually the answer? I want to a meeting recently and I was told by managers that this was staying. So what is the answer? We are all talking about, maybe, that discharging should start at Accident & Emergency and follow the patient through and this should continue. But how can it continue when we have these numbers waiting at doors? I am asking Congress, please, to support this motion, please support our GMB members and especially our NHS workers. We need to raise awareness within the NHS to look at how we can make the patient flow safe. We must protect the safety of our patients and staff. We need to take this back to our health boards and the Scottish Parliament and get our concerned voiced. Support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Melanie. Secunder?

TERESA WILL (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am seconding issues arising from patient flow in the NHS. I am an NHS worker. I am not, however, directly involved with the patient flow model. I can step back and see what it is. It is unplanned, chaotic with patients, and quite often staff, not knowing what is happening, and it provides no dignity for the patients as they lie in a corridor. These are often elderly and confused patients.

Congress, most of us have elderly relatives. How would you feel if they were treated in this way? Would you be happy? If this was any relative of mine, I would want them to receive better care, not to be scared and further confused but their dignity should never be compromised. We can make a difference, Conference. Together we can vote to carry this motion and help the NHS nurses, my colleagues, in their fight to stop this model being used. This is patient movement to improve the statistics for management

to create the appearances that all is okay but, Congress, we know it is not. We are treating patients as if they are a problem and then moving the problem elsewhere in the building. This is not a compassionate solution. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Teresa. I call the mover of Motion 210.

## **SCRAP VAT ON DEFIBRILLATORS MOTION 210**

### **210. SCRAP VAT ON DEFIBRILLATORS**

Many defibrillators are not available 24/7, and in many instances, you are at least 700 metres away from one.

In cases of out of hospital cardiac arrests, the survival rate is sadly only around 8%, but can be up to 70% if treated in the first few minutes.

Removing VAT on these would help widen their installation by charities and other organisations, resulting in a typical saving of between £200 - £500 per machine.

Congress calls on the Chancellor and the Government to remove this damaging charge on lifesaving equipment.

## **E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

PAUL CULLEN (London): Vice President and Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Today I stand before you not only as the proud branch secretary of the East of England Service Branch but also as a paramedic. I am honoured to have been taught the life-saving skills needed to treat a cardiac arrest by our wonderful NHS. Unfortunately, after 14 years of Tory underfunding and increasing ambulance response times we often arrive too late and our efforts can be futile. In fact, a GMB survey released today found that one-in-four ambulance workers have witnessed a death in the last three years due to delays.

Each year in the UK around 30,000 people suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrests. Tragically, the survival rate is about 8%. However, when a defibrillator is used within the first few minutes, along with good chest compressions from ordinary members of the public, survival rates can soar to over 70%. Defibrillators are not luxury items. They can be life-saving devices in the chain of survival for cardiac arrest victims. Contrary to popular opinion, they don't re-start the heart. They stun the heart out of a chaotic ineffective rhythm back into a normal effective pumping rhythm. Yet despite their proven efficiency, the cost of defibrillators remains too high for many communities, organisations and individuals. Adding 20% VAT to the price of a defibrillator exacerbates this issue, making it even more difficult for schools, sports clubs, community centres and small businesses to afford these life-saving tools.

This is not just a financial burden. It is a morale failing. By imposing VAT on defibrillators we are essentially placing a price on a human life, valuing tax revenue over the possibility of saving a mother, a grandfather, a child or a friend. Having VAT on defibrillators is short-sighted, even from an economic perspective. The costs associated with cardiac arrests extends far beyond the immediate emergency. Survivors often require extensive medical treatment, rehabilitation and sometimes life-long care, which costs the already strained NHS even more. Defibrillators can not only save lives but they can save long-term costs. The moral argument far outweighs the economic argument, but even the economic argument doesn't make sense. By removing VAT from defibrillators it would be good for the patient, good for the NHS and good for our communities. I ask that you support Motion 210. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Seconder?

JAN SMITH (London): Congress, I second Motion 210: VAT on defibrillators. I am grateful to Paul who has moved this motion, which was submitted by my branch, which is East Dereham in Norfolk. You will all know that in the case of a heart attack speedy life-saving treatment is essential for the best chance of a survival. That means either someone doing manual chest compression or using, at best, a defibrillator.

As most of us know, a cardiac arrest can happen at weekends or during the night. Quick access to a defibrillator at any time of the day is essential and crucial. Every minute of a delay between a cardiac arrest and defibrillation reduces the chance of our survivals. Sadly, not everyone has a quick access to a defib machine. You are normally more than 700 metres away from one, but in the poorest areas the nearest machine can involve a round trip of nearly two kilometres.

Access to these machines should not be – I repeat, should not be – by post code. We need to make these widely available. They are essential. Heart attacks do not discriminate against the old and the young, the rich or the poor. Our motion is asking that the Government removes VAT from these vital life-saving machines. This would increase affordability and save lives. Currently, only local authorities, the NHS and specific first-aid charities are exempt from VAT on defibrillators. This means that this tax hits some of the essential places where they are needed, such as in care homes, small business, charities and community groups. They will have to pay a tax on defibrillators. They cost between £200 to £500. Please support this motion. It is important and a defibrillator could save your life. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does anyone want to speak in opposition? *(No response)* The CEC is supporting both of these motions. I will put them to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 209, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 210, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 209 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 210 was CARRIED.*



## **SOCIAL POLICY: EQUALITY & INCLUSION**

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call the speaker of Motion 195

### **DIGITAL VOICE SWITCHOVER – LANDLINES MOTION 195**

#### **195. DIGITAL VOICE SWITCHOVER – LANDLINES**

This Congress notes the switchover from analogue to digital services by the end of 2025 when current phone landlines based on copper wiring are phased out and replaced by using broadband connections. BT is fully retiring all old copper lines from December 2025.

Concern has been expressed by national organisations – Pensioners networks, Age UK, Silver Voices and others. The transition from analogue is estimated to directly affect up to at least 500,000 pensioners (and others) with personal/panic alarms.

The phasing out has been paused in some instances where a user is over 75 and or vulnerable and then also has to request additional equipment (handsets)

Congress is aware that many providers aren't properly identifying vulnerable customers in advance. This relates not only to the short notice given, but the effect on both Personal Care alarms which may be rendered inoperable, but for residents with burglar alarms which will need to be adapted as currently many are triggered/set using a traditional copper line

The Local Government Association (LGA) has identified that many vulnerable people are being targeted for personal information for fake websites or scams pressurising them into new contracts related to the digital switchover.

Congress, GMB needs to raise awareness and start a high-profile campaign through all our equality groups as the anxiety and concern about this planned switchover to digital voice connections is increasing as we get closer to the date.

Congress is asked to campaign to ensure :

All those who are in the following categories are identified :

- Clinically vulnerable
- Disabled
- Caring responsibilities/ power of Attorney
- Those of pensionable age

and

- are given at least 3 months' notice of any change
- phone providers (and local authorities) have a dedicated advice line –free of charge to support enquiries.

### **E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

JAN SMITH (London): General Secretary and Vice President, I am moving Motion 195 on Digital Switchover. Let's see a show of hands. How many of you know about the plan to switch our telephone landline network from analogue to digital so all calls will be made over a Broadband line? How many of you knew that this is scheduled to be done by the end of 2025? That is only 18 months away.

When this changeover was announced, it was condemned by the National Pensioners Convention as it will increase the risk of members being left unable to access essential and emergency services. Those who have access to the internet will just need to plug their phone into their router. But we know that many still don't have Broadband at home and many use their phone lines for a personal alarm or a healthcare device. In fact, in April Virgin Media and 02 temporarily paused the roll out of digital phone lines as, sadly, two vulnerable people died as their personal alarms failed when their landlines were switched off. We are clearly not ready as many of you live in an area with no mobile signal or no fast internet.

Colleagues, luckily for us, just last month BT announced that they will be moving their timetable to moving to full-fibre Broadband to the end of January 2027. This should be welcomed as it will give more time for care providers, such as local authorities, to replace vulnerable people's Telecare devices that rely on analogue.

Our motion is asking GMB to campaign to make our members aware of this switchover, which is important to them, particularly if they haven't got the facilities. I am the Secretary of the GMB Retired Members' Association and we can help by issuing information to branches to make our members aware of the switchover and the various possibility of scams or requests for money they may receive during this switchover. In the importance of our members, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Secunder?

STEPHEN CLAREL (London): Congress, the digital switchover of landlines is going to affect at least 500,000 pensioners and other people with learning difficulties and anxieties. I feel that going digital is not good for certain vulnerable people and it can breach the Equalities Act 2010 because it is classed as age discrimination. When my mum was at school she said she only got taught to use a calculator and now we are expecting people like my mum, who is vulnerable, to deal with complicated things like Broadband and Broadband connections, which may cause stress to this group of people. We need to challenge and protect these vulnerable people and help them out. Please vote for Motion 195. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stephen. I call Motion 196.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN MOTION 196**

### **196. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN**

This congress notes that it is mainly women that get abused, but there are men that also get abused, the percentage of abused men has increased. On average, those men that experienced partner abuse reported around two different types of physical abuse, and around three different types of psychological abuse.

Abuse could be any form which might amount to criminal conduct. The abuse could happen at home or anywhere and online.

The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners.

There is advice online where you can speak to advisers in confidence (Men's Advice Line) this is UK wide and also (Mankind Initiative) there is AMIS (Abused men in Scotland), there is Safer Wales and there is Men's Alliance in Northern Ireland

Abuse now includes violent, physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse, and again this could happen anywhere.

We ask congress to work with and help campaign with all the Male Domestic Abuse Helplines.

To lobby MP and MSP to help bring this to the Governments attention.

## **S11 – SCOTTISH PRIMARY CARE NURSING**

### **GMB Scotland**

*(Carried)*

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): Vice President and Congress, I am moving Motion 196: Domestic Violence Against Men. Whilst this motion is about domestic violence against men, I also want to acknowledge that it is not just men who are affected by domestic violence. So before I continue with this motion, if anyone is affected by the content of this motion, I urge you to seek support from a trusted source and have a safe space to speak. This may be from your safeguarding person in your region, a friend or one of the various helpline numbers available. Please know that you have the love and support from all of us here.

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics for 2022-23 show that one-in-three victims of domestic abuse are male. Just under 65% of these men are victims of partner abuse. One-in-seven men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime. The charity, Mankind Initiative, which provides an information support and signposting service to men suffering from domestic abuse from their current or former wife, partner, including same-sex partner or husband, identified that of the domestic abuse crimes recorded by the police, 25% were committed against men. Save Lives Data, which holds the largest data set on domestic abuse in the UK, indicated that only 4.8% of those men are being supported by local domestic services. This highlights how few men are being supported in local domestic abuse services. Mankind Initiative indicated that just under 60% of the men who called their helpline had never spoken to anyone before about the abuse they are suffering, and 64% would not have called if the helpline was not anonymous.

Currently in the UK, as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024, after removing anomalies in the data, there are 56 organisations with 64 dedicated spaces for men and 302 for men or women. The average number of spaces for men per organisation is only five.

2022/23 statistics tell us that 21% of male victims fail to tell anyone they are a victim of partner abuse, and 6.5% of those victims have considered taking their life due to partner abuse. The charity has seen an increase in calls regarding suicide ideation over the pandemic period and beyond, and thirteen men died at the hands of their partner or ex-partner.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 includes violence, physical, sexual, psychological and financial acts that could happen anywhere, at home and/or online. Abused men in Scotland – AMIS – is a registered charity that came together in 2010. This is an organisation that is able to help around five hundred men a year. Seventy per cent of men who contacted this charity had never called the police. Fear Free is a charity working to break the cycle of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking across the south-west. Services are completely free of charge and are open to all genders, sexualities, backgrounds and beliefs. Men’s Advice Line has a team of friendly advisers who will listen and believe you. They often non-judgmental support, practical advice and information, with a focus on increasing the safety of men experiencing domestic abuse, and the safety of any children, by providing confidential support. There is no freedom for those experiencing domestic abuse. Abusers dictate, control, abuse and then apologise for their actions, often saying “It’ll not happen again”, but it does. The abject misery, humiliation, fear, exhaustion, walking on eggshells, feeling totally controlled and totally powerless is how many victims feel. There is good support out *there* but not enough. There is stigma around male domestic abuse and we need to break that stigma down to enable men to speak out. We need more services and key worker support for charities and to better support male victims of abuse. Attention needs to be brought to this subject and it needs highlighting at Government level. Therefore, this motion asks Congress to work with and help campaign with all the male domestic abuse helplines and charities to lobby MPs and MSPs to push this topic forward along with the need for greater awareness and support and bring this situation to the Government’s attention. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

NICHOLAS HILL (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am standing before you to second Motion 196 which asks Congress to raise awareness and support for men experiencing domestic abuse.

As Linda highlighted, this is a much misunderstood and under-reported issue, and highlighting this issue in no way takes away from the horrifying figures around domestic violence perpetrated by men against women. It was only in 2015 and 2018 in Scotland that the new law was introduced to criminalise the use of emotional abuse, psychological abuse and coercive control in the absence of physical violence. This is something that many of these men experience but the stigma around the issue means that they do not speak up.

Part of the problem was summed-up by the North Yorkshire Police lead for domestic abuse: “So often we find that individuals may fail to recognise or struggle to come to terms with the fact that they are being abused”. Support networks can play a vital role in helping them to understand this and to find help. It is also worth noting that the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, known as Clare’s Law allows close friends and family to ask police if someone may pose a risk. Any information which is found as a result of this request will not be disclosed to anyone except the person in the relationship. I would urge Congress to support this motion. If this motion has caused any concern for anyone here, I can say that each region has a safeguarding lead who would be more than willing to listen and support in a confidential way. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nick. I call Motion 198.

## **MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING MOTION 198**

### **198. MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING**

This Congress is gravely concerned where mental health service funding has been cut leaving less of these vital community services.

We have seen tragic examples where mental health patients kill or commit suicide as they are unable to receive adequate support and have nowhere to turn to for help.

On Mental Health day in October 2023, there were 1.8 million people on waiting lists for mental health treatment and it costs £100m a year to send people hundreds of miles away to see private specialists.

Many are suffering in silence because of undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions. Many are turning up to A&E as there are no local alternatives.

We call on GMB to urge the Government and the incoming Labour Government to address this mental health crisis within the first 100 days in office.

## **E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

JAN SMITH (London): Congress, I am moving Motion 198 on Mental Health Funding. Firstly, colleagues, let me thank the CEC who saved my legs from having to challenge the SOC. The CEC changed their position on this existing policy to support with qualification, which I fully support.

Congress, we are aware that this is policy and that GMB has campaigned for better mental health funding, but we need to continue this push and fight. These people need the help and all the support they can get. This is not going to go away. In fact, it is getting worse, which is why we wanted a debate on this matter. More and more people, old and young, are suffering in silence while on waiting lists for treatment for their

mental health. More and more people, young and old, recently in my own area, my local newspaper, virtually daily, is reporting on suicides. It says at the end of it, "If you need help, call the Samaritans". As I have said, they suffer in silence. They will not talk and express what they are going through. Some are desperate and are turning up at hospital A&Es. The NHS and our emergency services are under constant pressure. Our hardworking members in the NHS and local councils are burning out as they are dealing with people who have nowhere else to go.

Colleagues, there is little support for mental health. In the Spring Budget in March this Government announced a 4% increase in day-to-day funding, but with inflation running at more than 4% this represented a cap. Last week figures came out saying that more than 330,000 children are waiting to receive mental health support with the average waiting times of over a year. This is not good enough. This is outrageous. These children are left in limbo and are being failed by the system.

We welcome Labour's commitment to ensure that every young person has access to specialist mental health provision in schools. We cannot, colleagues, keep under-funding mental health services compared with physical health services. Both are equally important, not only to me but to you and your families. Congress, let's make sure that the next Labour Government addresses funding for both physical and mental health in their first hundred days.

Congress, a Bill is going through where the mental health services are now putting calls out to the police and the police are only going to answer if they think it is essential. There is one tragic case in Norwich where a whole family, very sadly, was shot – two young girls and their aunt – by their father. The police never answered the call originally. So please support this motion. It is important. What happened can happen to any of us. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Seconder?

TRUDI TEW (London): Vice President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 198. I have sad personal experience of the current poor mental health provision thanks to the Tory decimation of the NHS. That is no criticism of the people who saved my son.

Additionally, in my convening, particularly in schools and local authorities as well as care homes I have seen the huge increase in members suffering with their mental health due to work or personal pressures caused by the financial worries thanks to austerity, or staff cuts which increase the pressure on the remaining staff. I bet you have seen this, whatever region you are in.

In the news we see daily suicides of young people, murders and other crimes committed by persons with unsatisfactorily treated mental health conditions. It's horrendous for the victims but so hard also for the families of the poorly people. The Tories have much to be ashamed of but this failing costs lives and affects the quality of life hugely of so many people. They often end up stopping work or being dismissed due to their absence or actions they have taken at work because of their mental health

crisis. This, of course, increases benefit costs. It is crucial that as a part of Labour's promise to restore the NHS appropriate importance is given to mental health services. Self-help, like dolphin music on podcasts, will not cut it. Please support this motion because you never know when you or yours might need help, and I really hope you don't. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Trudi. Does anyone want to speak in opposition? *(No response)* No. Then I will call Farzana Jumma to give the CEC's response.

FARZANA JUMMA (CEC): Good afternoon, Vice President and Congress. I am responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 195, 196 and 198. The CEC is supporting all of these motions with qualifications.

On Motion 195 the CEC recognises the importance of ensuring categories identified in the motion are not left behind with a digital switchover. However, our qualification is that there is no industrial campaign which can be run from the commitments in the motion. More work would need to be done to ensure that this can be relevant to our members in the workplace and build the union.

On Motion 196 there is no level of abuse or domestic violence that is acceptable. GMB has always stood firm on this stand as demonstrated by previous campaigns and policies. Our current resources include GMB's Domestic Abuse Charter, which is available on the website for members and reps to campaign in their workplace and for this to be implemented. Importantly, we recognise that men also face abuse, and that is set out clearly in the resources that are available to you. The CEC's qualification is that we would need to see which organisations and helplines are best suited to support members and workplaces in campaigning in these areas.

On Motion 198 GMB has long campaigned for better funding for mental health services. We can urge the Labour Party to address the mental health crisis in Government, but our qualification is that it may take Labour longer than 100 days to address the effects of 14 years of austerity on services while delivering on the core industrial issues of workplace rights for our members.

Therefore, the CEC is asking for Motions 195, 196 and 198 to be supported with the qualifications I have set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 195? *(Agreed)* Does Scotland accept the qualification on Motion 196? *(Agreed)* Does London accept the qualification on Motion 198. *(Agreed)* All those in favour of Motion 195, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 196, please show? Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 198, please show? Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 195 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 196 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 198 was CARRIED.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call the mover of Motion 206.

## **STANDING UP FOR TRANS KIDS MOTION 206**

### **206. STANDING UP FOR TRANS KIDS**

This Congress is aware that the Government are trying to bring in a law that will stop kids in school transitioning, also stopping the staff to use their pronouns.

1. This will stop a person being who they should be.
2. It's another way of bringing in a different type of Clause 28.
3. This could increase suicide in our younger people.
4. What pressure will this have on the staff?
5. There would be no one for anyone to turn to.

Do we want people to be appressed as they were in the 80s when Jill Knight put forward Section 28, no – we have come a long way since then.

Just imagine looking in a mirror and seeing something that should not be there, on your body, what would you do and how would you react? People can't help being born in the wrong body and need to be who they need to be. (This has been put on hold by the government at the minute).

## **B02 BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH Midlands Region**

*(Carried)*

ANGELA GILRAINE (Midlands): Congress, some people will be asking why am I wearing *this*? What you see *here* is normal to most of the people in this hall. If I do *this*, this is what trans people see in their body. So what is normal to us isn't normal to them. The reason why I brought this motion forward is because I'm so angry with the Tories because they haven't got a 'scooby' about kids in school. We are now going back to clause 28. As a gay woman who is married to someone who is non-binary, this really riles me. Trans people and non-binary people are going back over 20 years to where I was many years ago when I came out. I am not going to say how many. They are bringing in this motion about kids not being able to use their chosen names. They are talking about them needing to have single-sex toilets. Kids can change their name informally but with their parents' consent. Kids need consent to change their names. Also uniforms. They have to wear the uniform of their biological gender. That's bang out of order! People don't know what they are going through and the amount of suicides that people can have, could happen or what their families are going through. I'm sorry but I haven't gone to my speech but this is because I'm so angry.

We have some great transgender members in this union. Do you know, everybody in GMB supports people who are different. It doesn't matter who it is, what they are or



what they do. They are GMB members. But I pray to God that the Labour Party will take this out of the window and throw it out of the window. This means, for sports, allowing a gender-questioning child to participate in sports with the opposite sex will not be appropriate if it risks safety or fairness. What the hell is all that about? Are they going to hurt somebody? What are they going to do, punch them in the face? Or are they afraid that that kid might beat somebody in a race or whatever?

Under the Equality Act, single-sex schools can refuse to admit pupils of the other biological sex regardless of whichever child is questioning their gender. A school cannot, however, refuse to admit a child of the same biological sex on the basis that they are questioning their gender. What rigamarole is all that about? People are who they are. You cannot change who you are. I didn't choose to be gay. I am gay and I am proud to be gay. *(Cheers and applause)* Somebody whose brain is disorientated and needs to become who they are, who the hell are the Government to tell us that they can't do it? Who are they? I will finish in a minute before the colour changes.

Why are kids being treated so appallingly? It's not their fault that their brains are telling them something different to most people in this hall. This could also increase discrimination and suicide. I don't want to hear that one of our member's kids has committed suicide because they can't be who they are. They couldn't run a pig's pudding, excuse the expression. I ain't standing for that. I will stand tooth and nail to support anybody who may be different within this union, as our union does. *(Applause)* The disregard for the 'isms' as I call them is why I am supporting this motion. We have some really good reps who do amazing jobs, and we've got some really good members who are who they are. They can't change who they are. Please support this motion. Thank you. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Angela. Secunder?

JOHN-PAUL WESTWOOD (Midlands): When I was stepping forward to speak on this motion it dawned on me that I wasn't coming from a position of knowledge to comment as I'm not trans and I'm not a kid. However, my eldest child is. When I spoke to them and asked them their opinion, they were clear but they were shocked, not because there was a motion being raised but that the fact that it was needed at all. They said to me, "How do you think it feels to need a law to allow you to be the person that you are?" Then they said the most simple thing that I think I've ever heard in my life, which was "Just don't hurt kids". Congress, I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. I call Motion 207.

## **POLITICISING OF TRANS RIGHTS MOTION 207**

### **207. POLITICISING OF TRANS RIGHTS**

Congress believes that in recent years trans rights have become a political football for all major parties in the UK. The examples being the issuing of a Section 35 notice by the Tory government to block

Scotland's Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill and the introduction of Guidance for Teachers in English schools.

We must be bear in mind that at the centre of these political spats are trans people, trying to live their lives but who are the subject of political policy and legislation such as the quasi-judicial processes to legally change gender, the lack of provision for gender recognition clinics and rising hate crime.

With some studies, showing that up to 89% of trans people have thought about suicide further pressures imposed by politicians can literally be the difference between life and death.

This Congress therefore reiterates its commitment to campaign vigorously for the rights of trans and non-binary people and for universal reform of the GRA. Further, we ask the GS, CEC, NEC to use all means necessary to ensure that the voices of trans and non-binary communities are heard in debates affecting their rights within both the trade union movement and political spheres.

The GMB has a proud record of supporting Trans and non-binary people and this is not the time to stop the pressure on Politicians of all colours.

## **A55**

### **Wales & South West Region**

*(Carried)*

JEFFREY SUTTON (GMB Wales & South West): President and delegates, I propose Motion 207: Politicising of Trans Rights. The Equality Act of 2010 protects people from discrimination and helps to achieve equal opportunities in the workplace in society with nine protected characteristics, one of which is gender reassignment, transitioning from one gender to another.

In recent years trans rights have become a political football for all major parties in the UK. As parties are gearing up for the election, it seems that trans people are part of their manifestos and are pushed to the forefront along with the economy and immigration. In relation to trans women, the main focus of people's sudden interest makes up about 0.1% of the population of England & Wales according to the 2021 Census. That was 48,000 people. What effect on an election can demonising such a small group of people have?

The Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, would change equality laws to protect biological sex rather than gender to tighten up rules for women-only spaces.

Under the current Equalities Act protection covering single-sex spaces do not differentiate between someone born female or someone who is transgender. This would in practice mean that a transgender female would not have the same sex-based protections as someone born a woman. Even the Equality and Human Rights Commission has changed its stance and is against them. It says that defining sex as biological in the law would offer greater legal clarity. The Tories said that the law change would not remove the existing protection for transgender people. Well, if the law won't change anything, why change it? Their staunch supports like Women's Space and the

LGBT Alliance would not accept anything that did not undo the protections enshrined in the Equalities Act. Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, who is gay, said he felt that there were lots of similarities between what we experience as gay people in terms of prejudice, hate and discrimination and what trans people experience. Clearly there are some tensions between the sex-based rights of women and equality for trans people but, as he said, "I'm sure we can find a way through", but then he flipped on trans issues and defended women who voiced their concerns about trans issues.

Haven't trans people been through enough? Transitioning can come at a heavy cost, not financially but emotionally. It can lead to the loss of family and friends, alienation in society and mental and physical abuse. Up to 89% of trans people have thought about suicide. Further pressure imposed by politicians can, literally, be the difference between life and death. Let's help them, not add to their problems. The GMB has a proud record of supporting trans and non-binary people, and this is not the time to stop putting pressure on politicians of all colours. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jeff. Secunder?

EMMA JAMES (Wales & South West): Congress, I am seconding Motion 207. Where do we stand on trans issues? We have heard about Labour and the Tories but what about the other main parties? A positive from the Lib-Dems, but one that will probably never come to be enacted. The Lib-Dems reject all prejudice across all protected characteristics and believe that transgenders are entitled to the same rights as everyone else. The Green Party recognises that there are many gender identities that are within and outside of the traditional gender binary of man and a woman. The Green Party recognises that trans men are men, trans women are women and that non-binary identities exist and are valid.

Finally, and what else would you expect from Reform UK, they have said that it would ban transgender ideology in primary and secondary schools. Its website states that there are only two sexes and two genders. Obviously, no room for trans people, so it would seem. Congress, we as a union believe that transwomen are women and transmen are men. We need to engage with Labour and tell them to get on side and protect and enhance the safeguards and rights for the trans people. They should not be used to gain any political advantage. I am pleased to be able to second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Emma. Does anyone wish to oppose those motions? *(No response)* Then I call Carol Clarkson to respond on behalf of the CEC.

CAROL CLARKSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am responding from the CEC on Motion 206. The CEC supports the intentions of this motion and work is underway by the Equality and Inclusion Team to support workers facing the proposed non-statutory guidance from the Department of Education. It is not our understanding that the guidance will definitely stop young people from being able to transition. Our small qualification is to reflect that. However, the guidance does challenge school workers from being able to use a young person's chosen pronoun. It also attempts to limit the

ability of young people to transition without that information being shared with their parents or guardians.

GMB condemns transphobia in the strongest terms. We stand with our trans and non-binary members and support our members to be able to uphold these values in their right place. We are committed to campaigning alongside the trans community. Please support Motion 206 with the qualification outlined. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 206? *(Agreed)* Thank you. The CEC is supporting Motion 207. All those in favour of Motion 206, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 207, please show? Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 206 was CARRIED.*

*Motion 207 was CARRIED.*

Social Policy: NHS & Health Issues

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to the last two motions of the day: Social Policy: NHS & Health Issues. I call the mover of Motion 200 to the rostrum.

## **FREE DISABLED PARKING AT NHS HOSPITALS & NHS FACILITIES MOTION 200**

### **200. FREE DISABLED PARKING AT NHS HOSPITALS & NHS FACILITIES**

This Congress notes that NHS hospitals offer FREE PARKING where the car driver holds a blue badge. The process being that they have to validate their parking ticket, so no charge is levied.

We ask Congress for a level playing field so that ALL NHS Hospitals or NHS facilities AND where patients are being treated or seen under the NHS (e.g Private healthcare) provide FREE parking for all blue badge holders whether as a patient or NHS employee.

### **E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH London Region**

*(Carried)*

JAN SMITH (London): Congress, I move Motion 200 on Disabled Parking. Colleagues, the price of parking at hospitals has risen by over 50% within a year. This Government has failed in their 2019 pledge to end unfair charges by making parking fees for those in the greatest need. Shame on them! They have only been feathering their own nests. They don't care about us. Our motion is asking for a level playing field so that anyone with a Blue Badge should be given free parking at NHS hospitals and we also extend this to NHS facilities or to any clinical healthcare centres which could be for blood tests or for treatment, or any form of treatment or medical assessments that they need.

A disabled person, whether they are a patient or a NHS staff member, should not be expected to walk miles to find an office to validate their Blue Badge or car parking ticket. There has to be an easier way to do this. Congress, I ask you to fully support this motion

in the light of our disabled members, members of our families, friends and colleagues. Let them all have a free parking ticket. Also we call on the Labour Party Government, if they get into power which we sincerely hope they will, to pledge and honour this free parking for everybody. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Secunder, please?

CRISTINA PICU (London): President, I fully support everything that the mover has just said. I am a healthcare assistant and a student nurse working at St. Mary's in London. I am also very proud to be branch secretary of C33 Central West NHS Branch which covers several hospitals across central and west London.

Parking in the hospitals of our branch varies widely from very expensive to extremely expensive to not available at all. While parking was made free to staff during the pandemic this has not been available now for over two years. At the GMB we firmly believe in tearing down the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from working and having fulfilling lives. As Jan just said, we are not asking for much, only a level playing field and for a fair and consistent approach across all NHS trusts. I am proud to second the motion. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cristina. I call the mover of Composite 12.

## **FREE PRESCRIPTIONS AND LEVEL DOWN PRESCRIPTION CHARGES IN THE UK COMPOSITE 12**

*(Covering Motions:*

*211. FREE PRESCRIPTIONS – North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region.*

*212. LEVEL DOWN PRESCRIPTION CHARGES IN THE UK – Southern Region)*

## **FREE PRESCRIPTIONS AND LEVEL DOWN PRESCRIPTION CHARGES IN THE UK**

This congress we urge the GMB to campaign for free prescriptions in England.

As Congress will be aware, other parts of the UK already receive free prescriptions, however not in England.

This Congress calls for prescriptions for mental health issues to be exempt from prescription Charges.

- England is the only UK country where people have to pay for their medicines.
- Is it fair that England subsidises the rest of the UK?

There are currently only 10 conditions on the NHS website that are exempt from prescription charges and mental health isn't one of them.

Mental health affects all walks of life and is not limited to those on low or no income.

- Nearly 1 in 10 people have skipped medication in the past year due to the cost of prescriptions.
- 12% of people who pay for their NHS prescription have cut medication in half to make it last longer.

- Over a third (35%) of respondents reported they had the duration of their prescription changed, meaning they're paying more frequently for their prescription.
- 1 in 5 of us will have suicidal thoughts at some point in our lives.
- Research has found that every suicide directly affects 135 people – that's friends, family, colleagues, and the communities in which we live. On top of that, when somebody is bereaved by suicide, they are themselves at greater risk of taking their own life.

It is time to Level down prescription charges in the UK. I move

Moving Region: Southern

Seconding Region: North East, Yorkshire & Humber

*(Carried)*

CHRIS HIBBERD (Southern): Good afternoon, Congress and President. I'm the Tolpuddle Branch Secretary. Level Down Prescription Charges in the UK. This Congress urges the GMB to campaign for free prescriptions in England. As Congress will be aware, other parts of the UK already receive free prescriptions, however not in England.

This Congress also calls, in particular, for prescriptions for mental health issues to be exempt from prescription charges, currently standing at £9.90 per item. England is the only UK country where people have to pay for their medicines. Is it fair that England subsidises the rest of the UK? There are currently only 10 medication conditions on the NHS website that are exempt from prescription charges and mental health isn't one of them.

Mental health affects all walks of life and is not limited to those on low or no income. Nearly one in 10 people have skipped medication in the past year due to the financial crisis and cost of prescriptions. 12% of people who pay for their NHS prescriptions have cut medication in half to make it last longer, against medical advice. Over a third – that's 35% -- of respondents reported that they had the duration of their prescriptions changed, meaning they pay more frequently for their prescriptions. One in five of us will have suicidal thoughts at some point in our lives. Research has found that every suicide directly affects 135 people, that's friends, family, colleagues and the communities in which we live. Added to that, when somebody is bereaved by suicide, they are themselves at greater risk of taking their own life.

There are 200,000 suicide attempts each year. One hundred and twenty-five people die by suicide every week, which is one in every 90 minutes. That's the period of a football match. Suicide is the biggest killer in men under 50, and the suicide rate for young women under 24 has seen the steepest increase since records began. For anyone here today who is struggling, just because you are struggling doesn't mean you are failing. It's okay not to be okay. It's okay not to ask for help. Help is out *there*. Just reach out and ask for it from friends, family, your GP and Samaritans, to mention a few. It is time to level down prescription charges in the UK. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chris. Thank you. The seconder, please, for that composite?

JOSHUA BLACKLOCK (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am seconding Composite 12. I am going to keep this short and sweet today. Both Scotland and Wales have devolved governments, meaning that they have their own Parliaments and their own budgets. The Scottish and Welsh Parliaments make the decisions on how best to spend these budgets, separate to the UK's Tories. Both Parliamentary bodies decided that the health of its citizens is too important and that it would be in the best interests of its public to provide free prescriptions. Let's see if our new governing body next month can care as much for our citizens as Scotland and Wales do for theirs. Not only is this right but this is just. I implore you to support this composite. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joshua. It's hard to be a first-time speaker let alone having to wait right until the end of the day to make your speech. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition? *(No response)* No. I didn't think there would be. The CEC is supporting both of these motions so I shall go straight to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 200, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Composite 12, please show? Anyone against. That is carried.

*Motion 200 was CARRIED.  
Composite 12 was CARRIED.*

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, that concludes this afternoon's session of Congress. Thank you. We are on time and that is down to you and for doing your speeches brilliantly. I will see you tomorrow at 9 o'clock again. Enjoy your evenings.

*Congress concluded at 5.30 p.m.*

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