

**CONGRESS 2025**

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

**MALCOLM SAGE**  
**(Honorary Co-Chair)**

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**Held in:**

**The Brighton Centre,**  
**Brighton**

**on:**

**Sunday, 8th June 2025**  
**Monday, 9th June 2025**  
**Tuesday, 10th June 2025**  
**Wednesday, 11th June 2025**  
**-and-**  
**Thursday, 12th June 2025**

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**PROCEEDINGS**

**DAY TWO**  
**(Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025)**

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## **SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

### **MORNING SESSION**

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

#### **Call to Order**

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, delegates, can I call Congress to order. I hope you all had a good night last night wherever you were. Thank you to those who came to the President's evening. I am sure there are some bleary faces this morning, but that is fine.

#### **Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2**

THE PRESIDENT: The Standing Orders Committee will move SOC Report No. 2 this morning. Can Karen Dudley please come to the rostrum to move?

THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (Karen Dudley, London): President, Congress, moving SOC report No. 2. Withdrawn Motions. The SOC has been informed that the following motions have been withdrawn: from GMB Scotland, Motion 241 - Discrimination of Prostitution; Motion 243 - Reduce the Financial Wastage in our NHS; Motion 247 - the Urgent Need for Dentists to Treat NHS Patients; Motion 248 - the Impact of Changes to GP Practices on Our Emergency Departments; Motion 294 - Stop the Right-Wing Ideology; Motion 295 - Preventing the Right-Wing Wave Crossing the Atlantic. Motions 294 and 295 are the two motions that make up Composite Motion 15.

And from Wales & South West Region, Motion 245 - Pharmacy Stores Closures; Motion 246 - Access to the NHS Dentists Within One Hour Via Public Transport. Motions 245 and 246 are the two motions have that made up Composite Motion 10.

Emergency Motions. The SOC has accepted four emergency motions as being in order for debate. They are: Emergency Motion 1 - Urgent Clarifications to Protect Trans Women Considering the Supreme Court Narrow Definition of a Woman from Wales, and South West Region; Emergency Motion 2 - Defend the Local Government Pension Scheme, from North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region; Emergency Motion 3 - Collapse of Thames Water from London Region; Emergency Motion 4 - Stop Changes to PIP from London Region. The days and times when the emergency motions will be heard will be advised as soon as possible.

Bucket collections. The SOC has agreed two requests for bucket collections as follows: By Southern Region for the Macmillan Cancer Charity. The SOC recommends that this takes place at the close of the morning session today. And by London Region for Cuba Vive Medical Aid Campaign. The SOC recommends that this takes place at the close of Wednesday's morning session. We would ask those carrying out the collections to adopt an appropriate Covid-safe method in doing so. President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 2.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Does any delegate wish to speak in opposition to that report? No. In that case can I put that to the vote. All those in favour of SOC Report No. 2 please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Moorcroft Potteries Campaign**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, you saw our members yesterday from Moorcroft Potteries. They were sitting up in the visitors' gallery. Please welcome them to the stage this time to talk through their recent experience when four weeks ago Moorcroft went into administration and the wider issues around the Potteries sector. Would you like to come up to the stage. Sharon Yates, the Branch Secretary of Stoke Unity, will just give a few words. (*Applause*)

SHARON YATES (Midlands): Good morning, everybody. I stand here again 12 months later and another two factories have closed down, first, Royal Stafford and now Moorcroft. These girls here the skill that they have is world class and we cannot afford to lose it. It is just heart-breaking. The skills are dying constantly. We are being deskilled all the time with the low pay wages. We are not classed as skilled workers any longer. We are just classed as productive operatives, which is absolutely disgraceful. We need to do something about the energy. The energy situation is absolutely appalling. It is killing our industry. The Government have got to help us. They have got to help us or else Stoke-on-Trent Potteries will go and Stoke-on-Trent will die as well. We have only just the other day commemorated the centenary of city status. We will lose that because Stoke-on-Trent is a small city made up of six towns and once one of those factories closes within that town in the city, the community dies.

We also have a problem with tariffs. We export and our tariffs are more than what any other country's tariffs are coming into our country. This China dumping of cheap imports - we need to smash the trash. You will all open your cupboards and you will see "Made in China". You have got to get rid of it. You have got to start buying British ceramics again.

The fake wear - you have got factories in Stoke-on-Trent. Stoke-on-Trent should be a hub. It should have a clause to say anybody who makes pottery in Stoke-on-Trent sells pottery from Stoke-on-Trent, and not ride on the name of the city of Stoke-on-Trent and the pottery industry and import it into their factory shops and sell it in their shops made in China. It is absolutely disgraceful and disrespectful to the people of Stoke-on-Trent and the industry. We have got to rebuild the home market by getting rid of these cheap fake goods. If we rebuild the home market when we are struggling we will be able to sustain the buying in and able to produce again.

The Government I have got to say this, I cannot help it, Ed Miliband - net zero - he is ignorant, he is arrogant and his stupid decision-making is killing our industry. It has got to stop. (*Applause*) It is impossible for the pottery industry to survive without fossil fuel. Then we have the Prime Minister, a man who says the Labour Party is a party for the workers, is a party for working-class people. Let me tell you, a man with every opportunity who says his dad was a toolmaker. Well, Keir Starmer here's a message for you, my dad was a potter and his daughter, what she is doing, she is standing here tall with her union. Come on! She is standing tall with her union, fighting for the survival of the ceramic industry, fighting for the survival of the people of

Stoke-on-Trent, who could be waking up this morning and have no job to go to. *(Applause)* Please support our campaign. Please help save our pottery industry. Thank you. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: A great speech, Sharon. Well done, and, as she said, British ceramics and Smash the Trash!

### **Local Gift - London Region**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to the local gift which is London Region. You will see in the Congress Guide that our Local Gift has been chosen by London Region and the recipient is Keech Hospice.

Keech Hospice, based in Luton, cares and supports adults and children across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes with life-limiting conditions. It is one of the few hospices in the country which offers specialists for both adults and children and was chosen because it is free for people to use and unlike the NHS, it is not fully state funded. Therefore, donations like the ones we are going to be doing today, Congress, are vital to keep the service running, and free for those who need it. We will play a short video now about Keech Hospice. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

Thank you London Region, for making that your recipient. As I said earlier, unlike the NHS, hospices are not fully state funded so any donations will be welcome. Thank you.

## **Employment Policy: Health and Safety & Environment**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Employment Policy: Health and Safety & Environment. Can I have the movers of Motion 93, 96, 97 and 98 down the front, please, and mover of Motion 93 to the rostrum.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

### **MOTION 93**

#### **93. HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

This Congress is a motion for the GMB to meet with the HSE to encourage them to engage with recognised trade unions in a workplace, where there has been a fatality. Four and a half years ago our Wessex Water branch suffered the devastating loss of four colleagues in an explosion at Avonmouth. The incident was investigated by the police from 20th of December 2020 up until the point they decided there was no criminal charges to be brought it was then handed over to the HSE. The police communicated with me on a regular basis and kept me informed of their investigation. Since the 11th of July 2024 the investigation has been with the HSE. Despite attempts to contact the HSE they have not returned any correspondence. I would ask Congress to pass a motion that the GMB consider appointing someone to engage with the branch and HSE to update on progress into investigations where a fatality has taken place. I would also ask Congress to remember those who lost their lives. Brian, Luke, Ray and Mike forever in our thoughts. Congress I move.

#### **WESSEX WATER X45 BRANCH**

#### **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

CHRIS MARSH (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 93. Colleagues, I stand here today to move this vital motion with a heavy heart and a crucial purpose. Four and a half years ago our Wessex water branch suffered an unthinkable tragedy, the loss of four dedicated workers in a devastating explosion at Avonmouth. Their names - Brian, Luke, Ray and Mike - are etched into our hearts: fathers, sons, brothers and friends. Men who went to work that day and never came home. From December 2020 the police took up the investigation and throughout that harrowing process they remained in contact, kept us informed, respected our role and upheld the dignity of those we lost.

But since July '24 when the Health and Safety Executive took over, our calls and letters have gone unanswered. The silence is deafening. The absence of communication is not only disheartening it is disrespectful to the families, the colleagues and the union members left behind. We are not asking for miracles. We are asking for respect, recognition and representation that when a workplace fatality occurs, the HSE does what the police did, speak to the union, keep us informed, work with us. This motion calls for the GMB to meet with the HSE not to demand but to encourage a better way, a traditional way, a way rooted in the values of the GMB that was built upon: unity, transparency and justice. I urge Congress to support this motion. Let us honour Brian, Luke, Ray and Mike, not only with our memories but with our actions. Let no family ever again feel that they are waiting alone. Please support this motion on behalf of the families. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Chris. Secunder?

MIKE WILSON (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 93. Colleagues, I am proud to second this deeply important motion. What happened at Avonmouth must never be forgotten but remembrance alone is not enough. We must ensure that those who are tasked with protecting life in the workplace are held to the same standards as we expect of ourselves - openness, duty and honour. The Health and Safety Executive has a role of great responsibility and we respect that, but when a GMB branch reaches out in the wake of a tragedy, there must be a human response, an acknowledgement, a conversation. We are not strangers to loss in this movement. We know that grief when paired with silence, becomes heavier than it should ever have to be.

This motion simply asks that the GMB appoint someone a dedicated point of contact to engage with HSE during such investigations. Not to place blame, but to ensure that families and fellow workers are not left in the dark. This is not just a procedural motion, it is a moral one. It upholds the traditions of solidarity that define the GMB and it speaks to who we are: a union that looks after its own. In honour of Brian, Luke, Ray and Mike I second this motion. Let us walk forward with purpose, with clarity and, above all, together. Please support (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Michael. Mover of Motion 96, please?

## **SHOULD HSE INVESTIGATE WORK-RELATED SUICIDE**

### **MOTION 96**

#### **96. SHOULD HSE INVESTIGATE WORK-RELATED SUICIDES?**

This Congress notes recent high-profile cases of suicide with an apparent link to work pressure provide a timely reminder of the need for employers to both reduce the risk of work-related stress and support the mental wellbeing of their workforce.

The tragic death in January 2023 of Ruth Perry, a primary school headteacher who took her own life following a downgraded Ofsted report from 'outstanding' to 'inadequate', has led to a recent call for all work-related suicides to be investigated (Ref A) by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

This follows previous calls for the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) to be amended to include suicide as being reportable to HSE. There is also the broader context here of a worsening rate of suicide (Ref B) in key sectors of the economy, notably construction.

In 2023, there were 7,055 deaths registered in the UK where the cause was recorded as suicide (figures for Northern Ireland are provisional). Suicide in England and Wales is three times more common among men than among women. The gap between sexes has increased over time. RIDDOR and 'work-related suicide' This raises interesting legal issues, not least what a 'work-related suicide' is exactly in the eyes of the law. RIDDOR (Ref C) only requires a death to be reported to HSE where someone dies as a result of a 'work-related accident'. The same legislation defines 'work-related' as meaning "an accident arising out of or in connection with work" and an 'accident' as "including an act of nonconsensual physical violence done to a person at work". As a result, HSE is clear in its position that incidents of suicide (and/or self-harm) do not meet the reporting requirement under RIDDOR. In France, suicide is considered a workplace risk with employers required to prove to an investigator that a suicide of one of their employees was not work-related.

Congress, there's no requirement for employers to include any reference to suicide prevention or risk mitigation in company policies. Death by suicide doesn't need to be reported to the HSE (even when on company time or premises, or where work life's a factor) We are asking for:

1. Organisations to promote suicide awareness and prevention.
2. Improvements to the evidence-based statistics around workplace suicide.
3. Changing legislation requiring all businesses to have a focus and policy on suicide. Having a Suicide Prevention Policy doesn't just save lives; through imbedding a culture of suicide prevention it will help to bring about improvements in mental wellbeing across all employees.
4. Driving change within HSE to record deaths by suicide on workplace premises. We call on Congress to lobby the Health & Safety Executive to strengthen and improve the protections afforded to our members via the process of RIDDOR reporting.

Ref A <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-65651606>

B <https://www.lighthouseclub.org/ons-statistics-show-construction-suicide-rate-increase-in-2021/>

C <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1471>

### **C30 CITY OF LONDON BRANCH**

#### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

DIANE TIMMINS (London): Moving Motion 96. First-time speaker. *(Applause)*  
Congress, this motion calls for the Health and Safety Executive to investigate work-related suicides. As things stand, there is no requirement for a death by suicide to even be reported to the HSE even if it takes place at work on an employer's premises, even where someone's work life is a factor in their suicide. This means the HSE does not even record a suicide as a death at work. This is unfair to those who die by suicide.

Nor is there any requirement for employers to include any reference to suicide prevention or risk mitigation in company policies. This is failing workers. Having a suicide prevention policy does not just save lives through embedding a culture of suicide prevention, it will help to bring about improvements in mental well-being for all employees.

Recent high-profile cases of work-related suicide remind us how pressing the need is. One was the tragic death in January 2023 of Ruth Perry, a primary school head teacher who took her own life following a downgraded Ofsted report from “Outstanding” to “Inadequate”, which led to calls in the *British Medical Journal* for all work-related suicides to be investigated by the HSE. This follows previous calls from the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) to be amended to make suicide reportable to HSE. RIDDOR only requires a death to be recorded to HSE where someone dies as a result of a work-related accident. The HSE has made it clear that suicides do not meet the reporting requirement under RIDDOR.

In other countries such as France suicide is considered a workplace risk, with employers required to prove to investigators that the suicide of one of their employees was not work related. We need this in the UK, especially as there is a worsening rate of suicide in key sectors of the economy, notably construction. In 2013 there were 7,055 deaths registered in the UK where the cause was recorded as suicide. So what are we asking for? No. 1 - organisations to promote suicide awareness and prevention. No. 2 - improving the evidence base around workplace suicide. No. 3 - changing legislation to require all businesses to have a focus and policy on suicide. And finally, we are calling on the HSE to record and investigate deaths by suicide on

workplace premises. Congress, we ask that you please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Diane. Secunder?

DENISA TOMA (London): Good morning, everyone, President, Congress. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Seconding Motion 96 on Work-Related Suicide. Congress, in January 2023 we lost Ruth Berry, a respected head teacher who took her own life following a harsh Ofsted downgrade. Her death was not an isolated tragedy. It was a wake-up call. Behind the statistics are human stories of families broken, lives lost and workplaces that could and should have done more. Right now a suicide that happens on company time on company property or linked to overwhelming work stress is not even recorded by HSE. That is unacceptable. We are asking for something simple, human - that suicide linked to work should be investigated, recorded and prevented. Congress, I wish I didn't have to say this but I know people who have been pushed to the edge by their jobs. Good people, hard-working people. No one said what role did the job play in this? It is easier to say it was personal. It is easier to look away. When the pressure builds, when the deadlines never stop, when the support isn't there, it chips away at people and sometimes it ends in tragedy. Let's be clear, right now, if someone dies by suicide on work premises or because they could not take the pressure any more, it is not recorded by the HSE. A human life does not lose its value because the cause was mental not physical. We are asking for something simple: for suicide to be recognised as a workplace risk. We want every employer to have a suicide prevention policy. Mental health is health and silence is no longer acceptable.

Congress, I ask you from the heart, support motion 96. Let's not wait for another Ruth Perry to happen. Seconding Motion 196. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, thank you. Mover of Motion 97, please.

## **RIDDOR REPORTING FOR SUICIDE IDEATION**

### **MOTION 97**

#### **97. RIDDOR REPORTING FOR SUICIDE IDEATION**

Congress notes the campaign by Hazards for work related suicides to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013. The tragic death of Ruth Perry, a headteacher, in January 2023 gave impetus to this campaign.

Congress further notes that HSE does provide guidance to employers on how they can "reduce the risk of work contributing to the cause of suicide", and HSE recognises that many suicides are preventable with "appropriate interventions".

Congress however notes that HSE displays no awareness of the danger of "clusters" of suicide ideation and self-harm ideation. Congress notes the experience of GMB representatives who are supporting members in Amazon's BRS2 distribution centre in Swindon. Over the last 18 months there have been a disproportionate number of cases where GMB members have self-harmed, at work and at home, have attempted suicide, or have expressed suicidal thoughts, often in disciplinary or capability meetings in front of management. GMB representatives have been obliged to refer several members to the Samaritans, and to local NHS emergency mental health services, and in some cases to seek police support.

Congress further notes that while individual managers and HR representatives at Amazon have broadly behaved appropriately in each individual case, GMB detects no awareness from the company that the high number of incidences suggests a systemic problem, requiring action.

Congress notes that the phenomenon of "clusters" of individuals ideating self-harm or suicide is a well known phenomenon among public safety professionals. There is both UK and international experience, that "social contagion" can lead to suicide ideation being spread among communities, such as, for example, the so-called Werther effect.

Congress notes that GMB already produces a useful pamphlet on supporting members affected by suicidal thoughts. This is helpful for supporting individuals but does not address potential clusters.

Congress believes that as a question of public policy, workplaces where there is a noticeable cluster of suicide attempts, suicide ideation or self harm ideation require a preventative professional, public health intervention, to support the workforce, management and unions.

However, currently there is no mechanism whereby such potential clusters can be identified.

Congress resolves to campaign for there to be a legal obligation for not only work-related suicides, but suicide ideation and self-harm ideation to be reported under RIDDOR. This obligation should apply when an employer is aware of suicide attempts or where suicide ideation is expressed in disciplinary, grievance, capability or other meetings, or where Occupational Health reports, or doctor's fit notes provide evidence of suicide ideation.

Congress resolves to campaign that HSE, in conjunction with other government public health

agencies and the NHS, should have a strategy for supporting employers and employees where clusters of suicide ideation are identified.

**W15 THREE SHIRES BRANCH  
SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Referred)*

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Moving Motion 97. Congress, I am going to talk about the sensitive issue of suicide contagion where talking about suicide leads to other people thinking about suicide. Before I go on, if anybody is affected by any of the issues that we are talking about, please do take professional advice, either from the NHS emergency services, mental health services or from Samaritans. For a bit of context I am branch second of a big branch of 5,000 people which means I have got a lot of workplaces and, for my sins, I look after Amazon's big distribution centre BS2 in Swindon. I became aware that something was up there about 18 months ago. I was sitting in a disciplinary hearing and the disciplinary was about why someone hadn't phoned in sick when they just hadn't turned up for work and it became clear in the meeting the reason he hadn't phoned in sick was because he was in a 48-hour coma from having taken an overdose and then in the meeting he said, "I am going to kill myself after this meeting." So, it is a challenge. I had not come across that before. I said we are going to stop the meeting now. God bless them, the managers at Amazon are not bad people. They tend to be nice young people who work in a bad system. I just took charge, took him out and made sure he spoke to the Samaritans. But something is up. Every month someone phones me up from that place and says they are thinking of killing themselves. I can't talk too much about the specifics because it will be breaching their confidentiality, but I have had people self-harming on site, I have had people threatening not only self-harm but also to harm other colleagues, people taking weapons in. Amazon is funny, they search you on the way out to make sure you haven't

nicked anything but they don't check you are not bringing a machete in. I have had people phoning up and saying, terrible, they are thinking of not just suicide but murder/suicide where they are going to go in. I have involved the police. I am continually telling people to phone Samaritans. And it is wrong.

Now look, I am not an expert on dealing with this stuff, it is really difficult. The managers there are not experts, they don't know what to do. As I said, they are good people but there is no system for dealing with the fact that this is going on there. There is a well-known understood phenomenon among psychiatrists called the Werther effect where people talk about suicide, they see other people talking about suicide. It normalises it. There needs to be some professional intervention. Amazon do not talk to the GMB. Even though this is going on there, the managers, in each case they are dealing with it in a professional way, they are not bad people, but I do not think they have even spotted a pattern. There are 4,000 people working there and I do not see same manager each time. I have got some ideas why it is, but I am not a professional. I don't know what to do. I am not going to give you my half-baked ideas why I think it is going on because I might be completely wrong, it might be counter-productive. Someone needs to step in, someone needs to help but Amazon won't talk to GMB so I do not know if they know that there is a problem. I am telling you there is a problem. The people there know there is a problem but because Amazon won't talk to the union there is no way we can have a conversation, and there is no mechanism for this being reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

So what this motion is calling for is that there needs to be a mechanism that where a workplace has got a contagion of people talking about suicide and self-harm that there

is professional intervention from the state, from the health service, from psychiatric services, from whatever they need to help with that. When people are talking about suicide, when they are mentioning suicide to occupational health, in disciplinaries and grievances then it is not just the marvellous motion before me, it is not just when there is a suicide, it is when management are aware of the risk of a suicide, particularly if there is a cluster of it the that should be reported and there should be a responsibility for the state and for health services to step in and help solve that problem. I can't do it. We need someone who actually knows what they are doing. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Seconder?

MICHAEL WOODS (Southern): Congress, brothers and sisters, I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Suicide ideation is not just an issue within Amazon. It is already an issue for our children and grandchildren on social media. After 14 years of underfunding from our previous Government, mental health issues are affecting all areas of life. They are affecting members in schools, the NHS and in my area local government. This creates the perfect breeding ground for things like suicide ideation to take root. Whilst we wait for our new Government to make good their election promises, all I know is it is another work-related issue that we as reps face. All I know is that I remember the cases I lose, not the ones I win. I do not want to lose this one. So, Congress, let's get ahead of the game. Give us one tool, one it could be blunt rusty tool, it does not matter, just give us that one tool for our toolkit so that every officer, every convener and every workplace organiser can do what we do best. Let's Make Work Better. Support Motion 97, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Mover of Motion 98, please.

**THOSE WITH ‘WORKER’ STATUS SHOULD HAVE AN  
EQUIVALENT OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK  
ACT 1974 AND THE SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND  
SAFETY COMMITTEES REGULATIONS 1977**

**MOTION 98**

**98. THOSE WITH ‘WORKER’ STATUS SHOULD HAVE AN EQUIVALENT OF THE HEALTH  
AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974 AND THE SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND SAFETY  
COMMITTEE’S REGULATIONS 1977**

This Congress believes that gig economy companies who employ our members on ‘worker’ status should not be able to avoid their health and safety responsibilities. We want an equivalent of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the SRSC Regulations 1977 to cover anyone with ‘worker’ status or anyone classed as ‘self-employed’ but partnered with a platform and providing services. Our members who have ‘worker’ status or bogus ‘self-employment’, such as couriers, private hire drivers, and food delivery workers, are no less deserving of health and safety protections in law than our members who are ‘employees’. They face health and safety issues at work such as violence, attacks, robberies, injuries and in some unfortunate cases, death.

Congress notes that this issue stems from the serious health and safety concerns of ‘worker status’ members of P42 branch. A recent health and safety survey of Evri couriers revealed a staggering 66% of respondents worried about having their vehicle or parcels stolen while delivering on their round. 67% of respondents believe Evri should be doing more to protect the health, safety, and livelihoods of couriers.

Congress also notes another example affecting 'worker status' members of P42 branch in 2024. Uber announced they would be taking cash payments, which drivers would be responsible for collecting from customers. Uber did not give any consideration to the health and safety implications for the drivers, they did not even undertake a risk assessment to establish if this was a factor. A GMB survey of P42 branch Uber drivers disclosed that 94% were concerned that cash payments would put their safety at risk. A new Health and Safety at Work act specifically for the gig economy would force Evri, Uber, and other such companies to take responsibility for those undertaking work on their platform. The health and safety of those on 'worker status' contracts is just as important as those directly employed.

Congress adopts as policy to campaign for an equivalent of the Health and Safety Act 1974 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 to cover those working in the gig economy.

## **P42 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH**

### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

ELIZABETH COUSTON (Midlands): Good morning, President, Congress. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Comrades, for decades the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 have been our bedrock of our fight for safer workplaces. These laws ensure that employers are held accountable for the health and safety of their employees and that workers have a voice through safety representatives and committees. However, these protections are not universal. Many workers such as those on zero-hours contracts and in the gig economy are excluded from these vital safeguards. While the Health and Safety at Work Act places a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably

practicable, the health and safety of all employees, it does not extend these duties to workers without employee status. This gap leaves a significant proportion of the workforce vulnerable to unsafe working conditions without the legal protections afforded to employees. The Safety Committees Regulations 1977, which empowers trade unions to appoint safety representatives and establish safety committees does not apply to workers who are not classified as employees.

We the GMB have always stood for the rights of all workers regardless of their employment status. It is time for our laws to reflect this commitment. We must demand that the protection of the Health and Safety at Work Act and the safety committee regulations be extended to all workers. This means ensuring that every worker has a right to be represented by a safety representative, to participate in safety committees, and to challenge unsafe working conditions without fear of retaliation. Safety is not a privilege for a few, it is a right for all. Let us unite to ensure that every worker, regardless of their contract title, has the full protection of the law. Please help me and pass this motion. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Liz. Secunder?

STEPHEN SHINER (Midlands): Morning Congress, President, I am from the great and growing Midlands Region, first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) This motion is about making sure everybody at work gets the protection of GMB trade union health and safety reps. It should not matter whether your formal legal status is as an employee, a worker or self-employed. Wherever you work and under whatever

status you work as, we all face hazards, we all face threats, and we all need to get organised around health and safety.

Private hire drivers face the risk of assault, robbery and racist abuse on a regular basis. This should not be something we accept as being part of the job. This should be something that we as a union can sit down with the company and develop a plan to stop this abuse. Wherever a company recognises a trade union, then our safety reps should have the same legal backing as they do when members are identified as employees. We want to see the safety representatives and safety committees regulations extended to cover union reps for workers and self-employed. We should all be provided with information about health and safety implications. We should all be consulted about changes to processes. We should all be consulted on the training people get and we should all be consulted on who the company puts forward as responsible managers in health and safety. Thank you, Congress. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Stephen. Thank you. (*Applause*) Does anybody want to speak in opposition? No, in that case can I ask Gary Harris from the CEC to give the CEC's response, please.

GARY HARRIS (CEC): President, Congress, responding on Motions 93, 96, 97 and 98 with the CEC positions. On Motion 93 while the CEC has every sympathy with the branch and all those branches whose members have been killed at work, GMB cannot intervene in a formal fatal accident investigation whether it is conducted by the police, HSE, local authority or ORR, or any other regulator, for fear of prejudicing the investigation. The CEC recognises the frustration at the long delays in investigating the incident at Avonmouth and the lack of communication from the Health and Safety

Executive on developments. The CEC supports the intention of the motion but with two important qualifications. One, that rather than each GMB region/nation having a nominated person to liaise with regulators after fatal incidents, all GMB organisers should receive training on how to respond to fatal incident investigations. This training will be developed by the national health and safety department based on a pilot course delivered to Midlands Region in March 2024. Two, that the root cause of HSE's delays is inadequate funding and that further campaigning as outlined in the CEC Special Report on 50 years of the Health and Safety at Work Act is required to greatly increase the number of operational HSE inspectors available to investigate such instances.

On Motion 96, this motion usefully builds on the recommendations made in the 2024 CEC Health and Safety Special Report. The qualification is that the scope of reporting of work-related suicides must include every incidence where work may have been a contributing factor, not just those deaths which have occurred at the workplace.

On Motion 97 the CEC is strongly supportive of this motion in principle. However, GMB needs to take expert advice on some elements of the motion to determine whether the motion can be enacted in practice. These are whether or not it will create a hazard to workers for employers to record and report on suicide ideation. Legally, how ideation could be incorporated into RIDDOR regulations given that ideation is not itself a discredi(?) actual event. For these reasons the CEC is asking that Motion 97 be referred to fully consider all positions and the practicalities of this motion.

Finally, on Motion 98, GMB has long campaigned for an end to bogus self-employment and the CEC fully supports the intention of this motion. The qualifications are that,

one, section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in theory provides protections to all workers regardless of employment status. As this is the outcome of another employer's work activity, the issue is enforcing this. A new Act of Parliament will not be sanctioned by any government as the issue is effectively covered.

Two, the proposal for single worker status in the Employment Rights Bill may alleviate this issue to a degree, if enacted in 2026.

Three, the existing consultation regulations are not sufficient for a gig economy and the GMB should therefore demand new regulations to ensure equitable coverage for all workers. Therefore, Congress, we are asking that you support Motions 93, 96 and 98 with qualifications and for Southern Region to accept reference back on Motion 97, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Cheers, Gary, thank you. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 93? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 96.? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Southern Region agree to refer? (*Agreed*) Does Midland agree the qualification on 98? (*Agreed*) I do not need to take a vote on Motion 97. All those in favour of Motion 93, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 96, please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is also carried. And then all those in favour of Motion 98, please show. Any against? That is carried as well. Thank you.

*Motion 93 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 96 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 97 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 98 was **CARRIED***

## **CEC Statement: Our National Health Service**

### **CEC Statement: Our National Health Service**

#### **1. Our NHS**

- 1.1 The NHS remains the single entity that keeps the fabric of our society together in a shared set of values. Established on the principle that no person should worry about how they pay for the care they receive when they fall ill, no matter who you are, and for the last 77 years the NHS has been the service that has looked after us all.
- 1.2 We should never forget that the forging of the NHS was inspired and delivered by Trade Unionists. It is our ideals of collectivism that saw its conception, and so far, longevity.
- 1.3 Skilled workers up and down the country and from across the globe helped build our NHS from the rubble of war, including many of the Windrush Generation.
- 1.4 The NHS has been the most successful achievement of our labour movement.
- 1.5 The deliberate dismantling of the service by the successive Conservative led governments between 2010 and 2024 meant that privatisation accelerated, vital services were cut, and workers saw their pay stagnate and working conditions degrade.
- 1.6 Most devastating of all, public satisfaction in the NHS is at an all-time low at just 21 per cent for 2024. The biggest contributors to this dissatisfaction are waiting times and staff shortages – issues that our members feel acutely themselves.
- 1.7 When Labour left office in 2010 public satisfaction in the NHS was at 70 per cent.
- 1.8 It is a political choice to degrade such a fundamental service to the point that the public no longer value it. When we see no value in something, we eventually lose it. This is what is at stake.
- 1.9 “The NHS is not on its knees, but on its face.” This is the current Government’s assessment of the NHS after years of austerity, and one which many of our members agree with. This does not mean our NHS is destined to collapse, ceasing to be the service within the vision of its founders, but the only thing keeping it together is the hard work and commitment of our members who believe in that vision.
- 1.10 If we do not act now to reverse the decline, and rebuild, we will no longer have an NHS that serves to keep the nation healthy and safe from cradle to grave.
- 1.11 This Government must restore trust and confidence in the NHS so that it is still seen as valuable to us as a nation of people.
- 1.12 The UK is at a pivotal point of needing to rebuild all that has been broken in the last 45 years of economic choices that have prioritised private ownership and profit over public services. We need a truly progressive tax system, ensuring those with the broadest shoulders pay back into the society (wealth generated by ordinary working people) which allows their prosperity.
- 1.13 The fragmentation of essential health services such as GPs, dentists, pharmacies, and Adult Social Care has increased the strain on ambulance services, emergency departments, hospital beds, and community care services, something that has been added to by the increased demand for mental health services.

- 1.14 We must resist all attempts to have our NHS on the table in global trade negotiations. The health - or ill health - of our nation is too important to be a bargaining chip for any deal that makes private insurance companies even wealthier, just like they are in the USA. No one should want that for our country.
- 1.15 Without workers like our members, the NHS would not be able to continue under the current pressures. It is down to their dedication, and so far, their resilience that keeps the service operating. As GMB members say, "We make the NHS".

## 2. Workforce

- 2.1 Our members in the health service are struggling to keep up with the demands placed on the areas they work in. Where one part of the health service is failing, it affects others, putting immense strain on the whole service. This ultimately impacts on the standards of patient care, resulting in resource shortages, long waiting times, and poor treatment.
- 2.2 The poor pay and years of pay freezes across Agenda for Change and the contracted-out workforces has meant that our members have been compelled to go out on strike – a decision none have ever taken lightly. The historic Ambulance strike in the winter of 2022, with our demand to "Talk Pay Now", brought the government back to the table to offer an increase of over 5 per cent.
- 2.3 As part of our submission to the Pay Review Body we surveyed our NHS members to prove the state of their working conditions and ability to deliver care.

**67 per cent** of GMB members surveyed across the NHS believe that patient care has worsened in the last year, with **26 per cent** believing that there has been no change.

**92 per cent** of GMB members believed that the NHS is not better prepared going into this winter compared to last year.

**70 per cent** of respondents in a recent GMB survey said that they were working short staffed in their place of work.

When asked 'would you still sign up to work for the NHS if you were starting your career over again, knowing what you know now?' **60 per cent answered 'No'.**

- 2.4 GMB members ranked the top reasons why they have considered leaving the NHS (outside of pay)

<b>Low levels of job satisfaction/morale</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Stressful working environment</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Poor mental health or burnout</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Unmanageable workload/demand</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Staff shortages</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>High levels of staff turnover</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Inefficiencies in connecting services</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Problems with workplace culture</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Poor equipment</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Complex administrative processes</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Growing complexity of patient needs</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>12</b>

- 2.5 Our members have told us that the systems in which they work have serious impacts on patients, and the care they can give them. Where there should be a coherent flow of patients within the health service, there is often disruption. Those working in the emergency side of the health service are acting as triage for patients who are not in urgent

need, causing our hospitals to become overwhelmed with patients who should be cared for more locally. One huge contributing factor to the pressures on our members work, is the crisis in elderly care.

*"The last 10 years the ambulance service has been the scaffolding holding up the NHS, I'm sick of sitting outside A/E departments in an ambulance for hours due to severe demand on A/E."*

**Emergency Ambulance Assistant**

*"We are currently going through a budget cut to our community team to save the trust 50 million pound. We are already over stretched and are now having our staffing levels cut and case load increased. This will put patients and members of the public at risk due to the risk levels of our caseloads."*

**Mental Health Support Worker**

- 2.6 The chronic underfunding in some areas of the NHS, results in increased pressure in another, like ambulances queuing outside emergency departments, patients being treated in corridors and waiting lists that are longer than ever. Add to that lower banded staff on Agenda for Change are being paid minimum wage and certainly below the National Living Wage.
- 2.7 The NHS will not remain an attractive employer certainly in the frontline medical fields if there is not a serious overhaul of skills requirements and the costs associated with obtaining them. There are many barriers to entry, and certainly barriers to progression which are deepening unless something is done.
- 2.8 GMB has called for the return of nursing bursaries before and will demand that there should be an overhaul of the funding around qualifications for prospective health care workers. With university tuition fees rising again, and wages in the NHS stagnating, we will have workers in the clinical fields who will never be in a position to pay off their student debts. Staffing levels across the NHS may also be affected by recently proposed changes to visa requirements to work in the UK and is placing the current dedicated international workforce in uncertainty. If there are fewer options for workers from overseas, then there needs to be a plan to increase skills domestically and build up the workforce. These proposals will impact the already overstretched social care system which will put further strain on the wider NHS.
- 2.9 A cohesive and funded long term plan to develop new staff is essential. We cannot continue to implement new initiatives in attempt to reduce pressures, that draw staff out of already understaffed areas of the NHS, further demoralising and demotivating the workforce.
- 2.10 Our members have clear demands on the government:
  - Decent and dignified pay increases for all workers
  - Improvement in staffing levels
  - Insourcing all contracted out services as promised during the election
  - A plan for community care
  - A plan for elderly care
  - Patient education on what services should be used for

### **3 Devolution and the NHS**

- 3.1 In every area of the UK there have been immense strains on the health service. There is universality when it comes to the pressures that our members face day to day, and the concerns they have over future funding. Adult Social Care places great pressure on NHS services across all our nations, and our ambulance services are stretched to the limit.
- 3.2 In Scotland however, we know that it is possible to bargain to improve pay and conditions. Through GMB negotiations we have secured shorter working weeks and higher pay making them the best paid NHS workforce in the country. It is through our organising and political will that we can treat people with dignity and respect through their pay.
- 3.3 In Wales GMB is concerned about the significant cuts to funding that the service is facing. Unlike Scotland the funding is not devolved and is supporting more universal services for an ageing population within a much smaller economy. Our concern is that in to continue delivering services within the significant proposed budget cuts, that care boards will be resorting to Artificial Intelligence. We are committed to ensuring that GMB is negotiating with NHS boards in Wales to safeguard jobs and patient care, so that any changes are made with workforce consent rather than imposition.
- 3.4 In Northern Ireland our members are finding that staffing levels are low across all the departments they work in. This is exacerbating morale, and our own trade union activity as our reps are finding it difficult to get release. In

the Ambulance Service the Agnew v PSNI has taken to task the issue surrounding holiday and overtime pay. We are currently campaigning to get back payment of holiday pay and for calculations to be done correctly in line with legislation.

#### **4 Services – Community Based and Preventative**

- 4.1 **General Practice.** Since the start of the Covid Pandemic GP services have rapidly deteriorated, the 8:00am scramble for appointments and the uncertainty between practices on pre bookable appointments has led many to have to rely on A and E to treat conditions that would have historically been handled by a GP.
- 4.2 The government announced on the 27 February that for the first time in 4 years, government and GP representatives agreed reforms to GP contracts, “to fix the front door of the NHS and bring back the family doctor.”
- 4.3 The new deal between the government and the BMA will free up doctors from red tape and box-ticking targets to concentrate on what they do best - treating patients.
- 4.4 This is desperately needed; the government needs to fix the first line defence of the NHS and ensure that patients’ health is not compromised by failures to the system. This will enable ambulances are available to treat the most urgent in need and free up capacity to A and E departments.
- 4.5 **Access to Dentists.** It is essential to address the pressing need for dentists to provide treatment to NHS patients. The ongoing economic challenges faced by families across the UK have heightened the importance of accessible dental care, which is critical not only for individual health but also for the broader well-being of our communities. Poor oral health is a risk factor to general health issues which then manifest and puts strain on NHS services.
- 4.6 The prohibitive cost of dentistry and access to dental healthcare affects our members deeply. The availability of dental care within the NHS framework has diminished, leaving many patients struggling to access essential dental services. Increasing costs and the evolving landscape of private dental care have further exacerbated the situation, forcing many to forgo necessary treatment. We will hold the Labour Government to account on their promise for a dentistry rescue plan as the failed attempt by the Conservatives needs to have a viable alternative and not fall through the cracks in the change of government. This means that costs need to come down immediately, that public transport is improved across all communities so there are fewer barriers to access healthcare, and that dentists treat NHS patients more. Our belief however is that all dentistry be brought under NHS control.
- 4.7 **Pharmacies.** Nearly 800 pharmacies have permanently closed in England over the last four years, according to latest NHS figures. Pharmacists blame NHS funding, which they say has not risen in real terms in a decade.
- 4.8 Closures not only impact all those working in stores, but widen health disparities, making it harder for people to access prescription drugs, vaccinations, and other essential services. Deprived communities, where the need is greatest have, in recent years, seen the biggest decline. More than one in ten pharmacies have been lost, but in the poorest area with the largest health needs, 20% have closed in the last six years. This then reduces footfall and business to local shops and high streets, reducing jobs and choice and affordability to poorer communities without transport, or time. Whilst pharmacies are closing, Government continue to highlight them as a route to care to ease pressure on GPs.
- 4.9 The government has said it will look at the issue “in due course”, but in the meantime people living in rural areas or those with an older population are often hardest hit.
- 4.10 Along with GP services, pharmacies act as first line defence for the NHS and can treat everyday ailments that do not need treatment at hospitals, which free up hospital capacity for those most in need. We need to continue to highlight pharmacy services as part of the community services package that the government has highlighted needs to be overhauled.
- 4.11 **The Adult Social Care system is broken.** The relationship between the NHS, locally delivered care, and the largely for-profit care sector does not work. Elderly patients in particular, get stuck in a system, often in hospitals

and in the back of ambulances, when they should be in dedicated care homes, or supported in their own homes, by a skilled and motivated workforce on dignified pay and conditions. Our Special Report on Social Care to Congress 2023 called for a National Care Service, which we are holding the Labour Party to implement now they are in government.

- 4.12 We welcome the injection of £3.7billion additional funding for social care authorities contained in the Spring Statement of March 2025, however, more can be done to keep money in the system by cracking down on the tax avoidance measures used by many of the top private care companies.

*“If the job ... had decent pay and respect then vacancies would be filled and there would be enough carers to look after people in their own homes, enabling them to be out of hospital and free up beds in the NHS.”*

**Support worker**

## **5 Rebuilding**

- 5.1 This Labour Government must recognise the hope that many trade union members, NHS workers, and the general public have in them to rebuild our health service. This means an end to privatisation and atomisation of services, and a return to health services being owned and run by the Department for Health. We demand rebuilding, not reforming.
- 5.2 It's important we move forward together and rebuild the NHS with the government, rather than the government rebuild the NHS and instruct us how it is to be done.
- 5.3 The government has made a number of proposals to redress the disaster left behind by the Conservatives including the 10 Year Plan and abolishing NHS England. However, these plans include cuts and budget savings which we will need to ensure target the right areas. Over the last fourteen years our members have endured their jobs and basic necessities such as equipment and uniforms cut from budgets, and witnessed significant wastage of drugs and medicines just left to expire. There is very little trust in local management to take care of these issues and find that blame is always shifted to government rather than taking responsibility themselves.
- 5.4 The intention behind abolishing NHS England is to divert resources to the frontline, removing duplication of work and bringing the management of it all under the direction of the Secretary of State in the Department of Health and Social Care. This will be costly, and it will mean redundancies. We will need to be vigilant that money spent on putting people out of work doesn't engulf the budget we desperately need putting to good use getting people in to work.

*“More staff on the lower bands and a reduction of the more superfluous jobs!”*

**Ambulance Vehicle Preparation Operative**

- 5.5 As a union we have been working on better understanding the role of Integrated Care Boards and how money is allocated to services regionally. It is likely that there will be reforms to and mergers of the 42 ICBs across England and that their running costs need to be reduced by 50 per cent. We know they are responsible for commissioning services such as patient transportation (which is largely run by private companies) our concern is that this will lead to more contracted-out services and not the promised in-sourcing sweep we had been hoping for. Our view is that these should be run by the NHS, funded publicly and owned by us.
- 5.6 Similarly, NHS Trusts have been told to 'live within their means', which does not fill us with much hope considering the chronic underfunding that the NHS has been crippled by. Trusts have even been advised to set up Wholly Owned Subsidiaries to avoid VAT and make redundancies through.
- 5.7 We demand that these measures don't simply stop at cutting costs. This is not an exercise of trimming the fat because we have fully funded frontline clinical services, delivering decent healthcare. We need serious injection of funds into wages, equipment, training, and community-based care.
- 5.8 It cannot be understated how bad the workforce crisis is, and so far we are concerned that it is more austerity bound.

## **6 Pandemic Planning – Lessons from COVID19**

- 6.1 Every single worker with an NHS pass put their life at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the most tragic of cases some of those workers lost their lives. Our members were utterly betrayed by the last government who held them up as 'heroes' yet treated them with contempt when it came to supporting them through continuing to underfund and deny decent pay offers.
- 6.2 GMB has been contributing to the COVID Inquiry and will continue to campaign for pandemic preparedness.
- 6.3 Central to ensuring we have decent preparedness is for us to have built our NHS back through decent pay for all workers across the NHS estate; a significant increase to staffing levels on the frontline; properly integrated care plans for the elderly and vulnerable so they are not trapped in hospitals nor poorly equipped care homes; and proper personal protection equipment sourced through reliable suppliers.
- 6.4 Without the NHS being what it is, state run, universal and free at the point of delivery, our country would have suffered far greater than we did. This is our collectivism at its sharpest. Our movement ensured that we have the means to steer us out of danger, and this is why it is so vital to rebuild our NHS.

## **7 Our Final Message to the Government**

- 7.1 GMB members are demanding a commitment to ending privatisation, bringing all outsourced services like cleaning, catering, and facilities back in-house, as well as removing private-sector influence from Care Boards.
- 7.2 We demand real terms restorative pay after fourteen years of brutal austerity.
- 7.3 Working with our members, we can build a union-led workforce plan for safe staffing levels, reverse the levels of privatisation of patient facing services and private finance initiatives and challenge the excessive pay and poor accountability of NHS executives across all four nations.
- 7.4 Democratic oversight needs to be a priority. Workers and communities should have more say in how the NHS is run, ensuring decisions focus on patient care, not financial targets. Health outcomes are tied to poverty, housing, and working conditions, so NHS rebuilding must also address these inequalities.
- 7.5 This affects all GMB members, from those working delivering our health care, and all of us who need to be cared for. We must be resolute in fighting for our National Health Service.
- 7.6 Everything changed in 1945, people didn't want to go back to poverty, or means testing. Between 1945 and 1979 western European democracies broadly signed up to social contracts against hard-right politics, which meant worker involvement in policy, high wages and social security.
- 7.7 Britain established the NHS, which has dignified our country ever since. In the 2012 London Olympics the NHS was placed visibly centre, as a celebration of our national pride. Social democracy is now eroding, the hard right is on the march. Neoliberalism has hollowed things out – and unions are no longer seen as 'social partners' to be listened to.
- 7.8 There needs to be a clear commitment from this Labour Government to the nation that the NHS will be enshrined as a fully publicly owned and publicly funded, free at the point of demand health service, as envisaged by Bevan in the Attlee Government.
- 7.9 This Labour Government will have a crisis of legitimacy if they choose a path of further privatisation of the NHS, which would put at risk the sense of the collectivism that is at the heart of our health service. Our health care must not be offered up as being ripe for the picking. Doing so will endanger the social contract that sits at the heart of our society. That cannot be allowed to happen.

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to debating the CEC Statement on our National Health Service. Mo Akbar and Linda Carr-Pollock of the CEC will be moving and seconding the statement. I will then invite regions to speak on the report in order, starting with London Region. If the speakers on that report would like to come down to the front as well, I will be taking London, Midlands, North East, Yorkshire & Humber, North West & Irish, Scotland, Southern and Wales & South West, in that order.

MO AKBAR (CEC): President, Congress, comrades and friends, moving CEC Statement on Our NHS. Congress, the title of the CEC's statement is particularly apt as the NHS is our own: the product of the care, dedication, belief and sheer hard work of hundreds of thousands of workers who are there for us in our hours of greatest need. You will be familiar with the heart-breaking images and stories of the ambulance queuing up outside the hospitals or outside emergency departments, unable to bring patients into hospital due to bed shortages. You will all know the minutes that elapse before treatment make a lot of difference between the life and death or between full and only partial recoveries. So, my work in the Ambulance Service really is a matter of life and death. The work is our vocation and it should be placed above profit, spin and cost-cutting exercises. The market, whether internal through creeping privatisation with the outsourcing of contracts has absolutely no place here. Some things are more important than money and this was never truer than in the case of our NHS.

The statement before you is based upon empirical research and the lived experience of our members on the front-line of the NHS, not least in the Ambulance Service. We know what has to be done. We know that our NHS will not be restored until it is properly funded from the public purse through progressive taxation, calling time on

profit motives. This means the return of contracts including for patient transport services in-house, the proper funding of social care and an end to bed-blocking in our hospitals. This means proper pay and decent conditions for our members throughout the NHS services and the wider care sector which recognise their professionalism, ability and commitment. This means a return to the founding principles, the belief that dignity and a healthy life runs from cradle to grave. That does not depend upon the ability to pay.

We can do this. We know it can be done. Our NHS was built brick by brick out of the ruins of the Blitz, to the envy of the world. It was built upon the skill and the commitment of the workers drawn from every corner of the globe, who, far from being strangers to our shores, became an integral part of our society, and without whom our NHS could never have hoped to have functioned, let alone thrived and developed those dynamic and driven to serve and to care. The NHS defines us all and knits together the fabric of our civil society and acts as the surest pillar of the common wealth and as a treasury for all. Our NHS can be rebuilt, right here, right now, but only through the labour, expertise and vision of our members who are already able to secure a better, healthier and brighter future for us all. Congress, I urge you to adopt this CEC statement. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Linda to second.

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK (CEC): President, Congress, seconding the CEC Statement on Our National Health Service. Colleagues, this statement guided by your motions and the experiences of our members clearly calls for reforms to our essential services, GPs, dentists and pharmacists. These services should keep us healthy and catch issues

before they become serious, without any expense at the point of use, or long waits for appointments. We know that people are deterred from seeing their GP due to waiting times, the rush for appointments in the morning or the high costs of senior dentists - if you can find one. The lack of integration with the wider NHS means our hospitals, ambulance services and pharmacies are bearing the strain and are at breaking point. Having worked in the dentistry service, I understand the importance of good oral health and its link to preventing other health conditions. Regular check-ups can support the prevention of serious illnesses and spot early signs or indicators of them.

This is why this statement needs to become our union's policy. It recognises the magnificent work of our NHS workers, and outlines practical remedies to restore the NHS's lustre. It aims to provide a healthier future for people from cradle to grave, make clear that our NHS is not for sale and that private medicine and profit motives have no place in matters of life and death. It also institutes a system of preventative medicine that will cut costs by preventing or eliminating illness at the first signs.

Congress, the NHS is our chief jewel, the organisation and the people who save lives, make lives better and dignify our nation daily. This is a source of pride, hope and the lasting testimony of the 1945 Government. Our members gathered here today - ambulance workers, technicians, porters, dental professionals, nurses, pharmacists, health improvement practitioners and all healthcare staff - do magnificent work and know precisely what needs to be done. Therefore, let us trust those who do the work, save lives and truly care about the health, happiness and future of all of our people.

The NHS is ours, it is union built and it is the envy of the world. This CEC Statement reflects this knowledge and workers' priorities. I recommend acceptance in the sure and certain knowledge that this will be the first step in GMB's campaign to not only save but enhance the NHS. Please support this statement. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Would London Region come to the rostrum. Just before you speak, could I say that the delegate from North East, Yorkshire & Humber does not want to be filmed or put on social media, so can you respect the wish of that delegate, please.

SIMON RUSH (London): Morning President, comrades, I support this NHS Statement, but it does not show how much has changed or happened in the NHS since the 2017 CEC Statement was carried by Congress. Covid happened. The Tories locked down the UK to save lives, but were given stats of people dying daily, and we sat petrified watching as the numbers rose. We cannot forget the harrowing pictures of those heroic staff and the devastation of NHS staff who contracted the virus and lost their lives in the line of duty. But as a nation we felt safe because they were there every hour of every day caring for our every need. Many staff who survived are now left with physical impairments that have changed their lives. But how quickly the Tory Government forgot those, as well as those who were being left with the mental and emotional effects of surviving and working with the pandemic. We clapped, the Tory Government praised the levels of care, but they soon turned their backs, and the privatisation of the NHS carried on slyly under cover.

More money than ever is given to private companies who pay the least they can get away with and whose terms and conditions are not in line with the Agenda for Change.

More and more NHS trusts have created directors with high salaries, but on the patient front equipment, conditions and staffing numbers have declined. One of the biggest scandals, as we all recall, was PPE. NHS front-line staff worked without enough PPE despite the Tories spending £8.4 billion on PPE contracts. Just imagine where that money could have gone. PPE was never ordered or if it did appear was not fit for purpose and still companies were paid.

The new Labour Government has told all NHS trusts to cut spending. GMB London Region is witnessing front-line NHS staff either being made redundant or being TUPE-ed over to the private sector. We cannot stand by idly and watch this happen. Ambulances are unable to unload at A&Es because of the shortage of beds. People are unable to get a GP appointment. There are reports of people extracting their own teeth due to lack of dental appointments. Just imagine for a minute pulling your own teeth or doing a filling which you can actually order online. Community and social care has seen the biggest decline with closures and redundancies and with stress on mental health services. Sadly, suicides, as we have already seen today, have risen in the UK year on year.

THE PRESIDENT: Simon, can you wind up.

SIMON RUSH: I will speed up. GMB is listening to our members every day, hearing their upset and frustration, and the current Labour Government needs to listen as well. Last bit. The NHS needs more funding and the private profit-making companies who are concerned about their bottom lines and not staff morale or patient care need to be removed and all services brought back in-house to the NHS. Thank you, Congress  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. Midlands?

PAUL PICKERILL (Midlands): Speaking in support of this CEC Special Report. President, Congress, today I want to talk about something that touches each and every one of us - the National Health Service. The NHS was and is socialism and its architect Nye Bevan once said, "The NHS service will survive as long as there are people willing to fight for it." Well, we now have the capitalist vultures circling desperate to privatise our precious NHS. We now have the right-wing caucus backed by hedge fund billionaires and fronted by Nigel Farage desperate to sell it off. Now is the time for working people, trade unions, all those that depend on the NHS, all those that know what the alternatives are, to stand up and be counted, and I believe that the GMB should be at the forefront of that call. So, brothers, sisters, comrades and friends, let's work together to ensure the NHS remains a beacon of hope and healing for all. Please support. Solidarity! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Delegate from North East, Yorkshire and Humber, please.

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Speaking in support of the CEC statement: Our National Health Service. President, Congress. The NHS is the most successful achievement of the Labour movement. However, successive Tory Governments have damaged its very soul. With this new Labour Government we dare to hope for the chance to change. Now is the time to rebuild the NHS. We welcome the 10-year plan for the NHS. This has to start with protecting it from any global trade negotiations and bringing privatised services back in-house where they belong, and not privatise any more services, with the abolition of NHS England and commissioning

being put out to the ICBs. It is a political choice to break the NHS taken by the Tories. A lot of NHS staff are now paid the minimum wage and certainly below the National Living Wage. That is a disgrace and it is not what previous Labour Governments built Agenda for Change on.

With high waiting times for GP and NHS appointments, ambulances queuing to get patients to EDs to access emergency treatment and then being treated in corridors because there are no beds, with staffing levels that are sometimes dangerously low, a consequence of this is staff are taken ill.

In February, a GMB member signed off ill from their NHS trust with work-related stress. Working 50 hours a week, covering more than one area and more work than they could manage took its toll. When that member got home they sat at their kitchen table and looked at their own medication and thought, "That's bloody easy to do." They didn't, they got help from their daughter, who is an NHS mental health nurse, and they sought help from their GP. Though recovering, they have so far only managed three days at work since. Congress, that member is me. (*Applause and a standing ovation*)

Today I draw a line under it. To be able to change - change for good - I need to move on and start fighting again. We need a strong front-line of staff and services with proper funding so it can no longer be attacked and brought to its knees again. Rebuilding the NHS will take time but it is worth every step of the way. However, we should encourage the Secretary for Health and Social Care to work with staff to rebuild it rather than government rebuilding the NHS and instructing us on how it should be done. With the best will in the world, not every decision in not working with NHS staff is the right one. Enough damage has been done already. Healthcare is a right and the NHS gives

that right to every single person in this country. We ask the Labour Government to choose the right path, and make our NHS so strong that it cannot be broken or picked apart for the highest bidder ever again.

Congress, we cannot go back to the days when people in poverty could not afford healthcare. The health of people is not a bargaining chip or commodity to make a profit from. It is time to save our NHS and make a change for the better now. I support.  
*(Applause and a standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sarah, that took some courage. Thank you. North West & Irish Region delegate, please? *(Formally supported)* GMB Scotland?

MELANIE GALE (GMB Scotland): President Congress, GMB Scotland - the Brave!  
*(Applause)* Speaking in support of the CEC statement. Congress, the title of this report says it all “Our National Health Service”, and yes, it is ours. There will not be one single person in this hall today that has not relied on it in some way or form, or maybe even in the future. It has become the cornerstone of our society and communities. We must protect it with everything that we have got. We need change to do this. The increase in the NHS wastage of both stores and drugs through mismanagement is allowing money to trickle out the door with items out of date or even unused. This could be costing our NHS up to £100,000 every single day. What could that pay for and what could that put in place? This money could fund more staff to ease the already understaffed and overworked NHS, and believe you me, we are understaffed and overworked. As a result, staff are unable to order everyday items or equipment or even vital uniforms. We cannot even order a pen. Also, trying to get an NHS dental appointment, this is often an overlooked vital area of healthcare. Evidence confirms

that poor oral health is a high-risk factor to other serious health conditions. Therefore, we need an NHS dentistry service that is fit for purpose where everybody can attend without having to pay for private.

Our emergency departments are at bursting point. Waiting times are at an all-time high. People cannot get a waiting time to be seen by a consultant for a hip replacement or a knee replacement. Some people need to wait two years for this. And GPs are no longer assessing patients as they previously were. Can any user in this room today tell me if you have been able to manage to get a GP appointment. How long do you wait for? It is at an all-time high. This is unacceptable and GPs are no longer assessing our patients, which means patients are going to our emergency departments. Is this viable? No, because our emergency service is there for emergencies only. We can no longer sustain this. We need action now to ensure the protection and survival of our NHS. Please support this CEC Statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Melanie. Southern, and while Southern is coming up to the rostrum, could the movers and seconders of motions 185, 192, 194 and 195 come to the front, please.

JULIE HART (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, I rise today as the voice of every NHS worker who has held this service together through crisis after crisis. Our NHS is not just a health service, it is the beating heart of our society, built on the principles of care and equality, and has served us for 77 years. But today it stands battered, not by time but by political choices. Since 2010 we have seen a deliberate dismantling of our NHS. Privatisation has crept in, services have been cut and our members, our front-line heroes, have been pushed to breaking

point. Public satisfaction has plummeted to just 21%. That is not a statistic, that is a warning.

Our members are exhausted. Sixty per cent say they would not choose to work in the NHS again. They face low pay, burn-out and impossible workloads. Yet they stay. They stay because they believe in the NHS. Because they make the NHS. We demand more than applause. We demand action, fair pay for all NHS workers, no more cuts, insourcing of services, no more privatisation in disguise and a fully public, fully funded NHS, free at the point of use. We must also fix the first line of defence - GPs, dentists, pharmacists. These are not luxuries; they are lifelines. Congress, the NHS was born from a vision of a better world after war. Let us now rise with that same vision. Let us rebuild our NHS, not just for ourselves but for every generation to come. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Julie. Wales & South West, please.

REBECCA JONES-WESTCOTT (Wales & South West Region): President, Congress, from the amazing Wales & South West Region, speaking in support of the CEC Special Report. Congress, let's be clear, the NHS is not just a service. It is the living, breathing heart of our communities, in Tredegar, in Exeter, across our Valleys, in the coastal towns and in every corner of these Isles. For 77 years the NHS has stood as a promise that no matter who you are or where you come from, you will be cared for when you need it most. That promise was forged by trade unions like us, like Nye Bevan and it is being kept alive by our members' dedication and sacrifice, but today that promise is under threat like never before.

The CEC report lays out the hard truth. Years of deliberate underfunding, privatisation and austerity have pushed our NHS to the brink. In Wales we face the added challenge of trying to deliver universal care for an ageing population with budgets that simply do not keep pace with need. Our members are worried, rightly so, that cuts will force care boards to turn to artificial intelligence and automation, putting both jobs and patient lives at risk. Let's be honest, the NHS is not just on its knees as the report says; it is on its face. Waiting times are up, staff morale is down and public satisfaction is at an all-time low.

But let's also be clear it is the commitment of NHS workers, cleaners, porters paramedics, nurses and support staff that is holding that system together. As GMB Members say, we make the NHS. I want to pay tribute to my colleagues across Wales & the South West who turn up day after day under impossible pressures. They do it because they believe in the founding values of the NHS, but belief alone cannot pay the bills or fill the rotas. Our members are exhausted. They are working short staffed, facing unmanageable workloads and struggling with poor pay and morale. In a recent survey 60% said they wouldn't join the NHS again if they had the choice. That should be a wake-up call for every politician in this country.

The CEC report is right, we need urgent action. We need decent dignified pay rises for NHS workers. We need to insource services, invest in community and elderly care and overhaul the broken system of training and career progression. We must defend the NHS from being carved up in trade deals or handed over for private profit and we must demand that the new Labour Government in Westminster and the Welsh Government in Cardiff Bay work together to resub and rebuild the workforce and put patients before profit. In Wales we know what is possible when unions organise a fight. We will not

accept decisions made without the consent of the workforce. We will negotiate, we will get paid and we will hold the Labour Government to account. I support.  
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, thank you. I will put that to the vote. All those in favour of the CEC Statement, please show. Anyone against? That is unanimously carried.

*The CEC Statement was **CARRIED**.*

### **Industrial & Economic Policy: Public Policy Section**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Industrial and Economic Policy: Public Section. Could I ask the mover of 185 to come to the rostrum, please?

### **NHS LONE WORKING**

#### **MOTION 185**

#### **185. NHS LONE WORKING STAFF**

This Congress recognises increases in allegation against NHS staff especially those healthcare professional workers who work in the community. We call on Congress to lobby the NHS to introduce body cameras where workers are lone working or are deemed as vulnerable following a risk assessment. GMB has led a successful campaign for ambulance service workers but there are other vulnerable NHS Staff that this needs to extend to.

#### **C35 ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH LONDON REGION**

*(Referred)*

CATHY HOLLAND (London): Here we go again, it has to go down for me. President, Congress, moving Motion 185. Thank you ever so much for yesterday and getting this through. I do appreciate it.

Congress, thank you for allowing me to speak on this motion. While I believe the CEC statement on the NHS, as we all know, it needs protecting for the future. We also must do all we can to protect staff that work in the valuable service. Our NHS at present is not going far enough to protect staff from the possibility of allegations and violence. A couple of weeks ago my daughter who is a community nurse was phoned by a colleague who was anxious about going into a patient's home as he is known to make allegations against staff. Had the nurse been wearing a camera this would not have been a necessity to divert staff from other work. Of course, it can go both ways, protecting patients from abuse as well. If it contained an alarm so much the better. I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, seconder?

ANN WEEKES (London): Seconding Motion 185. The argument for body-worn cameras or body cams is often broached from the sole reactive need to find a fix to the increasing and ongoing threats associated with lone working. However, addressing the need through a kaleidoscopic lens means we see the use of bodycam as a part of a positive proactive triple package of employee, employer and patient care. In 2021 body-worn cameras were rolled out into all ambulance trusts across the UK. Four years on there is enough successful evidence to extend the roll out to NHS lone workers, including waking night staff, social workers and community-based nurses and health professionals. Cameras should not be a replacement for employers' legal and ethical duty to assess the specific risks associated with lone working. However, evidence from ambulance workers' trials shows that paramedics feel safer with cameras.

So let's look at some of the immediate benefits instead of disadvantages. Cameras are accurate reliable evidence as eyewitness recall can prove inaccurate. Footage from cameras can be invaluable as a training, continuous profession development or lessons learned resource based on real scenarios and supporting best practice. Footage can be a support for safeguarding concerns for vulnerable patients. Cameras can be a deterrent and also they can be a support for assessing police footage. So please, Congress, keep the door open to this discussion. Please support this motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Anne. Can I have the mover of Motion 192, please?

## **NATIONAL POLICY ON VIRTUAL WARDS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAFEGUARDING WORKFORCE AND PATIENT CARE**

### **MOTION 192**

#### **192. NATIONAL POLICY ON VIRTUAL WARDS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAFEGUARDING WORKFORCE AND PATIENT CARE**

This Congress notes: The growing adoption of Virtual Wards across NHS Trusts and employers, as part of efforts to alleviate pressures on inpatient services. While Virtual Wards offer opportunities for innovation in care delivery, their implementation raises significant concerns about governance, staffing levels, workforce implications, and the risks to patient safety.

This Congress believes:

1 The introduction of Virtual Wards must be underpinned by national GMB Union policy that ensures equitable implementation, robust governance, and proper resourcing to safeguard both patients and healthcare staff.

2 NHS Trusts and Employers must be held accountable for ensuring that Virtual Wards are introduced and operated safely, with staffing levels that always exceed demand to account for patient care and staff well-being.

3 The lack of national standardisation has created variations in how Virtual Wards are deployed, leading to inequalities in care and inconsistent workforce protections.

4 Without proper staffing, training, and technological safeguards, Virtual Wards pose serious risks to both patient outcomes and the mental health of overstretched healthcare workers.

This Congress recognises: The best aspects of Virtual Wards include:

- Improved patient comfort and experience by allowing patients to recover in familiar home environments.

- Reduced hospital pressures by freeing up inpatient beds for those requiring acute care.
- Potential cost savings for the NHS through shorter hospital stays and more efficient resource allocation.
- Innovative care opportunities through advancements in remote monitoring and technology.
- The worst aspects of Virtual Wards include:
  - Exacerbation of health inequalities, especially for patients without suitable home environments, access to technology, or informal carers.
  - Increased burden on families and unpaid carers, who may be unprepared or unable to manage complex care needs.
- Potential decline in patient safety, with fewer in-person clinical assessments and delayed responses to emergencies.
- The riskiest aspects of Virtual Wards include:
  - Staffing shortages and inadequate training, leading to unsafe care environments for both patients and staff.
  - Technology reliance, which carries risks such as system outages, cybersecurity threats, and errors in remote monitoring.
  - Inconsistent implementation, resulting in unequal care quality across different regions and providers.

This Congress calls for:

#### 1 Adoption of a National GMB Union Policy on Virtual Wards:

- The GMB Union to campaign for a nationwide framework ensuring Virtual Wards are introduced and operated with accountability, consistency, and patient safety as priorities.
- The policy must include clear requirements for minimum staffing levels (that exceed demand), skill mix, and training to ensure safe and effective delivery of care.
- NHS Trusts and Employers to provide regular reports on Virtual Ward performance, including patient outcomes, workforce impact, and lessons learned.

#### 2 Accountability of NHS Trusts and Employers:

- NHS Employers must ensure the introduction of Virtual Wards does not increase workload or exploit existing staff.
- NHS Trusts must develop and publish transparent procedures for monitoring and evaluating Virtual Ward programs, including independent reviews of patient safety and staff well-being.

#### 3 Workforce Protections and GMB Union Involvement:

- The GMB Union must be involved in consultations on Virtual Ward policies to advocate for staff rights, fair workloads, and safe working conditions.
- Training must be provided to all staff involved in Virtual Wards, with ongoing support to prevent burnout and maintain high standards of care.

#### 4 Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms:

- Mandate thorough evaluations of Virtual Ward programs, focusing on patient satisfaction, safety, workforce impact, and cost-effectiveness.
  - Use evaluation findings to standardise best practices and address identified risks.
- #### 5 Equity in Access and Implementation:
- Ensure that Virtual Ward services are accessible to all patients, regardless of socioeconomic status, geographic location, or home circumstances.

This Congress resolves to:

- 1 Adopt this motion and advocate for the development of a robust national GMB Union policy on Virtual Wards.
- 2 Work with NHS Employers, the Department of Health and Social Care, Staff Council and devolved government bodies to ensure the safe, equitable, and sustainable implementation of Virtual Wards across the UK.
- 3 Stand firm that staffing levels must without exception exceed the minimum required to protect both patients and workers, ensuring that Virtual Wards become a positive evolution of care rather than a source of risk and inequality.

**PLYMOUTH HEALTH P19 BRANCH  
WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

IAN MINARDS ( Wales & South West): Moving Motion 192, National Policy on Virtual Wards Accountability and Safeguarding Workforce and Patient Care.

First-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*) Colleagues, I am here today to talk about the future of our NHS, about how care is delivered, how our members work and how we protect both patients and staff in a changing healthcare landscape. At the heart of this motion is a simple but powerful truth - innovation must never come at the expense of safety, and right now the growing adoption of virtual wards is running ahead of the governance, staffing and safeguards needed to make it work properly.

Congress, we are not against innovation. Done right virtual wards can bring real benefits. Patients recover in the comfort of their open homes. We free up hospital beds for those in acute need. We reduce pressures on overcrowded wards and over-stretched services. But let's be clear, our members are being redeployed from face-to-face care to monitor patients remotely without any additional staff to support this shift. They are now expected to use their personal vehicles to visit homes, often without proper insurance, putting them at a legal risk. The current mileage rate of 45 p does not cover fuel, wear and tear any more. Staff are effectively subsidising the system out of their own pockets.

Add to this the challenges of lone working, poor mobile coverage and insufficient training, it is crystal clear we are putting people in unsafe situations. This is not just about healthcare delivery. It is about terms and conditions, legal protections, safety and respect.

The worse aspects of virtual wards are already visible: families forced to provide care they are not trained for; patients left in unsuitable home without access to the technology needed, clinical assessments missed, emergencies poorly managed, inadequate staffing, systems that crash, all contributing to a postcode lottery of care, where your health outcome depends on where you live.

Congress, this is not good enough. That is why we are calling on the GMB to adopt a clear national policy to take the lead and set the standard on how virtual wards are introduced, a policy that says no more ruling out virtual wards without proper consultation, no more staff being asked to do more with less, and no more silence from employers when things go wrong. We demand staffing levels must exceed demand, not just meet it, because patient care is not a number on a spreadsheet, it is about human lives and the people who protect them. We call for regular reporting, independent reviews and honest evaluation so we learn from mistakes and improve. We call for equity in access so patients in poor housing or rural communities are not left behind. Most of all, we call for GMB members to be at the heart of every conversation about virtual wards, because without that voice, without the voice of the workforce, these programmes are built on sand. Congress, virtual wards could represent a new frontier in healthcare but without strong union oversight they risk becoming just another cost-cutting measure, one that exploits workers and short changes patients, so today I

ask for the support of this motion: support our members, support safe staffing, support innovation. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ian. Secunder?

YVONNE HEALY (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 192. Colleagues, virtual wards are being hailed as the future of healthcare, offering patients the comfort of home and freeing up precious beds, but let's be clear, innovation without accountability, without the right resources and without the right voice of the workforce is not progress: it is a risk. We all know the pressure our NHS faces. We welcome new ideas but not at the expense of patient safety or the mental health of our already over-stretched staff. Right now virtual wards are a postcode lottery. Some trusts are getting it right, others are cutting corners, leaving staff unsupported and patients vulnerable. That is not good enough.

The motion calls for the national GMB policy a gold standard for virtual wards. We demand minimum staffing levels to go beyond the bare minimum. We demand proper training, robust technology and regular transparent reporting. We demand that the NHS employers are held to account so no one is left to cope alone, be it the patient, carer or staff. We must not allow the virtual wards to become a back door for cost-cutting or a way to push more on to families and unpaid carers. We must not accept a system where your postcode or your wi-fi connection determines the quality of your care. We must fight for equity, for safety and for the dignity for every patient and every worker. Let's be the union that stands up and says yes, we want innovation but we want it done right, we want it done fairly and we want it done together. Congress, I urge you to support

this motion. Let's see the standards. Let's protect our patients, our colleagues and our NHS. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Yvonne. Now the mover of Motion 194, please.

## **SOCIAL CARE TIME TO BARGAIN FOR BETTER**

### **MOTION 194**

#### **194. SOCIAL CARE: TIME TO BARGAIN FOR BETTER**

This Congress welcomes the scrapping of the Scottish Government's version of the National Care Service (NCS) which lost all confidence from all corners of civic Scotland; believes it would have become yet another hopeless and expensive quango; recognises that despite the years of contributions to the Bill process, very little has changed for social carers who are still enduring overwork and underpayment; recognises the need for urgent investment in frontline social care. Congress recognises that the role and responsibilities of social carers are rapidly expanding, as proven by win after win in council job evaluation panels; and believes that to meet rising public need due to an aging population and to stem the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector, that the Scottish Government and councils must deliver the pay, terms and conditions to match. Congress condemns that many private social care employers pay only statutory sick pay; and notes that since 2021, the NCS Bill has cost £28.7m whilst in 2024, the Scottish Government snatched away without consultation the £38m earmarked to deliver sick pay, maternity pay, and paternity pay to the sector – the 'Missing Millions'. Congress notes the efforts of those to agree a Scottish sectoral bargaining framework in social care; condemns the failure of the Scottish Government to implement it; and notes that the Scottish Government is continuing to agree a social care minimum without any meaningful consultation with trade unions.

Whilst recognising GMB Scotland's right to determine its own policy with regards to the Scottish Parliament, congress supports its calls for the Scottish Government to:

- Immediately implement and convene sectoral bargaining in social care.
- Implement £15 an hour for social carers and a proportionate increase for nursing and ancillary staff, and if it will not, agree with trade unions a timetable on when it will be achieved by.
- Reinstate the 'Missing Millions' to deliver sector-wide sick pay, maternity pay and paternity pay.

## **S14 PRIVATE CARE BRANCH**

### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

ELIZABETH MARTIN (GMB Scotland): Moving motion, Time to Bargain for Better. Social care, five years on from Covid and the horrors experienced by social care staff, and nothing has changed. We were promised change and foolishly we thought change would come. But promises are easily made and quickly forgotten. The Feeley Review was commissioned by the Scottish Government with a remit to recommend improvements to adult social care in Scotland. This report, completed in 2021, made several recommendations which, if they appeared and were taken on board, would improve pay and terms and conditions for social care staff and move towards improvements in social care with the recommendations going towards setting up a national care service.

Many of the recommendations in this report were not included in the National Care Service Bill. The Bill was based on a co-designed model, but after years of contributions to the Bill, no change for staff. Many stakeholders withdrew from the Bill including GMB Scotland, as it was not fit for purpose. That version of the Bill which has been scrapped - the cost of the failed Bill £28.7 million. Fair Work in Social Care, another Scottish Government initiative, meaning pay, sectoral bargaining, an

effective voice and terms and conditions - all going nowhere fast despite years of meetings.

Terms and conditions. Scottish Government funding was made available. This workstream had three years of meetings with the decision made to prioritise sick pay, maternity pay and paternity pay. After going back and forth it was finally in place how this would be implemented. The final hurdle informed the funding was no longer available. £38 million earmarked for improved terms and conditions for social care, no longer available. Gone. It has been asked on numerous occasions where the missing millions have gone, only to be told: no longer available.

Sectoral bargaining - again years of meetings, still no agreement from the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government continued to agree on carers' minimum pay without any meaningful consultation with trade unions.

Effective voice - social care staff to have an effective voice, unions should be able to visit all care homes and give these members a voice.

The roles and responsibilities of social care workers continue to grow, with an ageing population with complex medical needs, as shown in win after win in council job evaluations, an example being South Lanarkshire Council homecare wage £18 an hour. That is £5.40 more than the Scottish Government minimum wage for carers.

Staffing crisis - we are on the verge of losing many overseas workers on the care worker visa. When these overseas workers are gone from social care many care homes will close due to lack of staff. Homes that remain open, existing staff will be plunged into

an intolerable unworkable situation and the vulnerable elderly in our society who require care will suffer. The recruitment and retention crisis will continue until the Scottish Government and councils step up and deliver on pay and terms and conditions. £28.7 million wasted on the National Care Service Bill that was not fit for purpose. £38 million snatched away from improving terms and conditions. Social care workers deserve better than false promises and funding being snatched away. We will not rely on promises any more. We want firm commitment on improvement in the social care workforce. We were good enough during Covid to put our lives at risk but not good enough now for decent pay or terms and conditions. We want change now ---

THE PRESIDENT: Elizabeth, can you wind up, please?

ELIZABETH MARTIN: -- not in one year, two years or five years. Now! We want GMB to apply pressure on the Government to get round the table and start talking. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Secunder for Motion 194, please?

MARGARET BOYD (GMB Scotland): Morning Congress, President, I am from the mighty Scottish region. They are obviously sleeping. (*Laughter*) Congress, social care is in crisis. Staff are overworked and underpaid whilst private sector employers send millions of profits to tax havens. We would not tolerate this in our NHS so why tolerate it in social care? In Scotland, the social care workforce has been made promise after promise. The Scottish Government's National Care Service Bill was government by press release. Grand claims with no plans. Workers were marched up the hill with months of talks only to be let down. There can be no recovery in our NHS without first

improving social care. That is just how vital care workers are and that has been reflected in equal pay campaigns across the country where care workers are fighting and winning.

South Lanarkshire carers remain one of the highest paid in the UK thanks to the support of the local rep of South Lanarkshire Council, but elsewhere carers have not been able to bargain. Scotland was ahead of the rest of the UK after a historical agreement between Ministers, trade unions and employers to negotiate the pay, terms and conditions across private care. But we now risk falling behind as the Scottish Government refuses to convene the bargaining table. It remains the only major publicly funded service in Scotland without some form of bargaining structure. The social care workforce cannot afford to go back forward when they are ready to move forward. It is time to bargain for better. Thank you, Congress. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Margaret, thank you. Mover of Motion 195, please?

## **DOUBLE RATE OF PAY FOR CARE AND SUPPORT WORKERS ON WEEKENDS AND BANK HOLIDAYS**

### **MOTION 195**

#### **195. DOUBLE RATE OF PAY FOR CARE AND SUPPORT WORKERS ON WEEKENDS AND BANK HOLIDAYS**

This Congress believes that care and support workers play an essential role in our communities and should be fairly compensated for the critical work they do. We demand that care and support workers be paid double the standard rate for work carried out on weekends and Bank Holidays. These workers frequently work during times when others are resting or spending time with loved ones, sacrificing their own time to ensure the care and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals.

Providing a double rate of pay for weekends and Bank Holidays is a fair recognition of their dedication, hard work, and the often challenging nature of their roles. This Congress calls for the implementation of double pay for care and support workers on weekends and Bank Holidays across all sectors and employers.

### **S37 SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH**

#### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

KARIMAH KELLY (Southern): Good morning, Congress. Forgive me, I am dyslexic and I am incredibly nervous. *(Applause)* Thank you. I rise today to not just move this motion but to demand justice: justice for carers and support workers, who provide essential services for the most vulnerable members of our community: the elderly, the disabled and those living with chronic illnesses, and for those who have mental health complexities. These individuals are unsung heroes and I would like to take the time to personally acknowledge each and every one of them for the incredible work that they do. *(Applause)* Let us be clear, underpaying these workers is not just a financial issue but also it is a moral failure. It is an insult to those who dedicate their lives to care for the well-being of others and yet, strangely, their pay remains so low, forcing many to struggle financially despite the selfless devotion that they offer others. This motion does not ask for luxury. It just asks for fairness. So, what is an extra £4 to help them maintain the care that they so desperately need?

This frustrates me greatly as I know this is not just a demanding job physically and emotionally; on many occasions, it is challenging as well as heart-breaking. I know that this type of work is more than a job, it is a vocation, so double pay on weekends and bank holidays is clearly not a charity. It is an investment into a stronger healthcare

and support system. This is about respecting and valuing the sacrifices that they make, and I can safely say if my mother was anything to go by, personally, I would treble the rate of pay to ensure her safety and well-being, or should I say the safety and well-being of the carer.

So, Congress, can I ask you: what are you willing to pay for someone to leave their families to come and look after yours? Can I urge you to stand up for those today who stand up for us all year round and, let us be clear, their work matters, their time matters. It is time to award them accordingly. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Your nerves did not show at all. Well done. A seconder, please.

STACEY BLAIR (Southern): Hi, I am from Southern Region and also from the National Care Committee (*Applause*) Hooray! I am proud to speak in support of Motion 195. Care and support workers are the foundation of our social care system. When social care functions work well, we see measurable improvements: fewer hospital admissions, smoother discharges, less strain on all the emergency services. We provide essential complex care to vulnerable individuals not just during convenient work hours, we work weekends, bank holidays, Christmas Day. Whilst others take a rest, we turn up because care is not nine to five. You don't just pencil in your dementia for when it suits me. I am there working sacrificing my time with my time with my family in order to make sure that you are medicated, clean, fed and advocated for. We do this because we care, but because we care we are often exploited.

So, it is key to point out that absolutely everyone one in this room - everyone - is a likely to need social care at some point. Should it take a personal experience for you

to really truly understand what it is that we do and the importance of what we do? We are not fairly recognised for our commitment and there is this longstanding imbalance in how care work is valued. We speak about dignity in care, but how can you speak of dignity when you do not show it to the very people that provide that service?

This motion is not about comparison or competition, it is about fairness, about raising the standards across the board and creating proper parity between professionals in social care as well as healthcare. Double pay for weekends and bank holidays is not a luxury. It is just a fair start. It is a baseline gesture of respect for unsociable hours, for personal sacrifice and for the skilled, emotionally demanding work that carers and support workers carry out every day. We want a strong, stable care sector, not just fit for now but fit for our future, and we are only going to do that if we are willing to invest in the people that turn up every day and hold it up. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Stacey. Well done. Any speakers in opposition? No, could I ask Simon Day from the CEC to respond? Can I have movers and seconders of 244, 249, 250, 257 to come to the front as well, please?

SIMON DAY (CEC): Good morning, President, good morning, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 185, 194 and 195.

Turning first to Motion 185, NHS Lone Working Staff, from London Region. The use of body-worn camera has been an issue of personal choice for Ambulance Service workers, not all of whom want to wear them. GMB has not consulted with its wider NHS and community healthcare membership on the use of body-worn cameras and should incorporate this into any campaigning. We wish to refer this motion in order to

carry out this consultation with our membership. We note as well that there may be views from patients on this matter although we would not canvas those and they might be used in any negotiations with employers.

On Motion 194, Social Care Time to Bargain for Better, from GB Scotland, the CEC supports the work of the care sector representatives in Scotland while highlighting the issue of the missing millions and encourages the organising efforts behind this campaign. The other asks of this motion are already established GMB policy and with the change of Government, the national voice of care sector workers is being heard in Westminster, where devolved nations are being consulted on the outcome of fair pay agreement in adult social care. GMB is making a strong case for sectoral collective bargaining for the sector's workforce. The qualification is that the region will be able to make further representation for itself in the autumn when public consultation opens on the design of the fair pay agreement and sectoral collective bargaining.

Finally on Motion 195, Double Pay Rate for Care and Support Workers on Weekends and Bank Holidays, workers in the care sector work 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The industry is poorly paid, but in many instances, enhancements are paid during Christmas periods and other bank holidays. However, weekend working is in almost all instances not paid at an enhanced rate. CEC's qualification is this: that we build a workplace-by-workplace campaign within the care sector and care sector employers rather than all sectors.

Congress, to recap the CEC is asking that Motion 185 be referred, Motions 194 and 195 be supported with the qualifications I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. Does London Region agree to refer Motion 185. No? Yes? Sorry, can I just have that confirmed, you accept the referral? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Does GMB Scotland accept the qualification on Motion 194? *(Agreed)* And does Southern accept the qualification on Motion 195? *(Agreed)* I do not have to put 185 to the vote. All those in favour of 192 which the CEC are supporting, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of 194, please show. That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 195, please show. Thank you, that is also carried.

*Motion 185 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 192 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 194 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 195 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Social Policy: NHS & Health Issues**

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We continue with motions relating to the NHS so could I have the mover of Motion 244 to the rostrum, please.

## **THE INSTALLATION AND USE OF AUTOMATIC DOORS IN ALL HOSPITALS**

### **MOTION 244**

**244. THE INSTALLATION AND USE OF AUTOMATIC DOORS IN ALL HOSPITALS** This Congress advocates for automatic doors in all hospitals to improve accessibility, promote hygiene, and create a more efficient flow of traffic in healthcare facilities. Hospitals are high-traffic areas with diverse groups of people, including patients with mobility issues, healthcare

professionals, visitors, and support staff. Ensuring ease of access is essential in such settings to enhance patient experience, support accessibility, and maintain hygiene. This inaccessible struggle with manual doors affects both those visiting the building and the staff that have to try to navigate objects and patients through them, potentially leading to increased workplace strains and injuries. The installation of automatic doors in hospitals aligns with modern standards for accessibility, infection control, and operational efficiency that hospitals can improve the experience for patients, visitors, and staff, ensuring a safer, more accessible environment that meets the demands of healthcare settings. By introducing Automatic doors, in all hospitals they can: Provide easier access for patients with mobility challenges, including those in wheelchairs, using walkers, or with limited strength. Reduce the need for physical assistance to enter and exit, fostering independence for those who may otherwise struggle with manual doors. Automatic doors support a smooth flow of people, crucial in emergencies or busy periods. They help avoid bottlenecks and allow for quick movement of all equipment. Hospitals operate 24/7, and reducing friction points ensures that critical areas are always accessible, increasing overall operational efficiency. Congress we ask:

- The GMB to lobby the UK government and to work with the NHS to provide the finance the SEF that will help support the easy access for disabled staff, patients and visitors.
- We ask that GMB encourage the government to survey hospitals and act positively on the results, to continue to fight for the rights of disabled people to access buildings with ease, ensuring better accessibility for all.

#### **G95 GLASGOW NURSES BRANCH**

#### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

TERESA WILL (GMB Scotland): GMB Bonny Scotland, moving Motion 244, the Installation and Use of Automatic Doors in All Hospitals. Conference, it is known that

most hospitals in the UK do not have electronic doors. Can you imagine that you are an inpatient and that a porter is taking you from your ward to the operating theatre, radiology or even for radiotherapy. The porter has to navigate you on a trolley and open fire doors to get you safely from A to B. I have had a discussion with our porters in the hospital where I work in Gartnavel General Hospital in Glasgow that has the Beatson Oncology Hospital attached. They have informed me that they have sustained injuries while pushing the trolley and having to open their doors. They have hurt their backs or even jammed their fingers or arms. They have also spoken about patients needing to try to help them which resulted in patients getting injured.

Have you heard of PIR, passive infrared sensor? This is a motion detector that doors have where you do not have to touch anything; as you walk forward the door will open. PIR is a sensor that you do not even need to press. This should open when there is a general movement. This would be a lot easier for everyone. Even patients or staff that have their own wheelchairs, if they struggle to open these doors also. Regarding passive infrareds, at night time, for security reasons, these are also automatically locked at main entrances into the hospital. If there is a fire alert then they automatically open as these are connected to the fire panel. There is also the push-button system that you activate the doors to open. These are called hospital access control systems. Any of these would give better patient care and smooth running and patient transfer also but all staff would benefit from these when moving equipment from various departments within the hospital. These are called hospital access control buttons. This is also a good idea but they can easily be broken when patients or staff hit them too hard. Also this can be an infection control problem as many staff, patients would be touching these on a daily basis.

Congress, we ask that GMB lobby the UK Government and to work with the NHS to provide the finance that will help support easier access for disabled staff, patients and also visitors. We ask that GMB encourage the Government to support hospitals and act positively on the results to continue the fight for the rights of disabled people to access a building with ease, ensuring better accessibility for all. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Teresa. Secunder?

MARGARET BOYD (GMB Scotland): Hospitals are busy, high-pressure environments. Every day they serve patients with mobility challenges, the elderly, parents with children, healthcare workers, pushing equipment and countless others navigating stressful situations. One of the easiest ways we can improve their experience is by making hospital entry and movement more accessible, and automatic doors do just that.

Accessibility. Automatic doors make life easier for everyone, especially patients in wheelchairs or with limited strength. No one should have to struggle just to enter and exit a hospital.

Hygiene. In a post-pandemic world infection control is more important than ever. Manual doors are high-touch surfaces, hot spots for germs. Automatic doors reduce that risk, supporting cleaner, safer environments for both staff and patients.

Third, efficiency. In emergencies or peak times automatic doors help keep people and equipment moving. They reduce delays and improve the overall flow of traffic throughout the hospital.

And finally, energy efficiency. Modern automatic doors are smart, equipped with sensors and timers that conserve energy and help regulate internal temperatures, reducing costs and supporting environmental goals.

In conclusion, automatic doors are not a luxury. They are a practical necessary upgrade that improves safety, access and the daily experience in our hospitals. Let's support this motion and take one more step towards a more inclusive and efficient healthcare system. Thank you, Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Margaret, thank you. Mover of Motion 249, please?

## **SUBSIDISED FLU VACCINATIONS**

### **MOTION 249**

#### **249. SUBSIDISED FLU VACCINES**

This congress notes: Teaching Assistants and other support staff have been overlooked, underpaid and undervalued since these roles were created. Support staff worked throughout Covid in schools, many went down with Covid and ended-up with Long Covid. There was an expectation that support staff were the buffer between teachers and Covid. Influenza cases in the Winter are on the increase and hospitals are often overwhelmed. Schools are workplaces where flu can spread quickly. People are only entitled to the Flu vaccine free of charge on the NHS, if they have underlying medical conditions. Lessons must be learnt from the pandemic and flu outbreaks since then. This congress calls on GMB to campaign for the school support staff to have subsidised Covid and flu vaccines for support staff. This should form part of the negotiations over the SSS NB. Let's protect our support staff by putting pressure on the Government to subsidise the cost of the injection.

## **L09 LB LAMBETH BRANCH**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

LISA EDWARDS (Southern): First-time delegate, second-time speaker *(Applause)* I am here for Motion 249, Subsidised Flu Vaccinations. As a support worker for over 10 years this motion is close to my heart. School support staff, including teaching assistants, learning support staff, admin staff, caretakers and other non-teaching roles, are the backbone of the education system. Despite their essential role, they have long been overlooked, underpaid and undervalued.

Why must GMB act? As a union representing thousands of school support staff, GMB have the responsibility to campaign for basic health protection in the workplace. Ensuring access to subsidised vaccines is a public health measure and a matter of workplace safety. These demands align with GMB ongoing around the SSMB, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, which is soon to be implemented, a new mechanism for national collective bargaining on pay and conditions for school support staff in England. Bargaining for health protections including subsidised vaccines. Should we not be a priority within the SSNB framework recognising the health inequalities and the front-line risk faced by support staff?

Our call to action. This Congress calls on GMB to: campaign nationally for subsidised Covid 19 and flu vaccinations for all school support staff; make this issue a core demand within the SSSNB negotiations; lobby government to recognise school support staff as essential front-line workers who deserve free or subsidised access to preventable healthcare; work with public health bodies to ensure support staff are included in

priority vaccination groups during any further outbreaks of pandemics. Protecting school support staff is not only a matter of fairness. It is an investment in the well-being of our school, our children and our communities. I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Lisa. Secunder?

TERENA GROVER (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I rise today to second 249. During the Covid 19 pandemic support staff continued to attend school in person often without adequate protection or recognition. Many contracted Covid-19 at work and some are now living with the long-term effects of long Covid, which significantly impacts their quality of life and ability to work. The expectation that support staff would act as a buffer between teachers and Covid 19 exposure was never formalised, resourced or recognised. This is a clear example of occupation inadequacy and a failure to adapt safeguarding front-line education workers.

The current situation. Influenza continues to be a major public health concern with rising case numbers and increasing pressures on hospitals each winter. Schools are high-risk environments for the transmission of respiratory illnesses, including Covid and flu due to the close contact, poor ventilation and the pressures of the children who may be asymptomatic carriers. Free flu vaccinations are currently only offered via the NHS to those with underlying health conditions, specific age groups or in certain front-line health and social care roles. Most school support staff do not qualify for free access. Without subsidised access, many low-paid support staff simply cannot afford to pay privately for annual vaccination, putting their families and the school communities at risk. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

## **BIRTH TRAUMA**

### **MOTION 250**

#### **250. BIRTH TRAUMA**

This Congress recognises the increasing number of expecting mothers who suffers from birth trauma, often with little or no psychological support or aftercare. The emotional and mental impact of such experiences has long-lasting effects on mothers, yet the currently system fails to address these needs adequately. Congress also acknowledges the extreme pressure placed on Midwives, who, due to the overwhelming administrative burdens, are unable to dedicate sufficient time to provide the level of care, emotional support and guidance that expecting mothers require. Therefore, this Congress believes that urgent reforms are needed to ensure that midwives can focus more on patient care and less on paperwork. In addition, we call for the appointment of a Minister for Midwifery within the UK Government, whose responsibility would be to oversee the improvement needed in Midwifery practices and to develop strategies to eliminate the psychological impact on expecting mothers caused by current practices.

#### **H30 HENDON BRANCH**

##### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Terena. Mover of Motion 250, please?

ROBERT WHEELER (London): Madam President, Congress, good morning, moving Motion 250, Birth Trauma. I rise to speak on behalf of thousands of women across the UK who carry not just their babies but trauma of their birth for months, years and sometimes a lifetime. Birth trauma is real, it is raw and it is too common. In the UK today too many mothers are left to suffer in silence after traumatic births with little or

no psychological support or after care, whether it is an emergency C section a difficult labour or birth that simply did not go as planned, these experiences can leave deep emotional scars.

I know this because I have lived it. When my partner was told that our baby was in distress and she would need an emergency C section, I was ready to be by her side but instead I was told to leave the ward. When I refused, I was threatened with security to be removed. I stood my ground and I told them to call the police because I am going nowhere. No parent should have to fight to be present at the birth of their child. No mother should be left alone at that moment of fear and vulnerability. And no family should carry the trauma of that experience for a lifetime.

Let me be clear. This is not the fault of our midwives. They are doing heroic work under impossible conditions. They are overwhelmed by their administrative burdens and under-resourced and often unable to provide the emotional support they know their patients need. That is why we are calling for something bold and well overdue. We are calling on Congress to lobby the Government to appoint a dedicated Minister for Midwifery, one whose sole responsibility is to oversee improvements in midwifery practices, develop national strategies to eliminate the psychological harm caused by current maternity care. We must ensure that no mother is left behind emotionally, mentally or physically after giving birth. This is about dignity in childbirth. It is about respecting women's experiences and it is about building a maternity service that heals not harms. Congress, we cannot allow birth trauma to remain invisible and we cannot allow silence to be the standard of care. Please agree and support this motion for action for mothers, midwives and the future generation. Vote for this motion 250, Birth Trauma. Congress, I move (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robert. Secunder?

BEVERLEY GUNNING (London): President, top table, good morning. Branch Secretary P06 Branch. Second time to Congress, second-time speaking, seconding Motion 250. As I have lived in the London Borough of Brent my whole life and as a mother of three I have seen the deterioration of the midwifery service. The only midwifery service for most Brent residents is in Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow which is a bit far from me. My deceased mother was a midwife and my deceased father read a midwifery book. I have been lucky as a black woman who had unbeknown to me underlying health conditions. All my children were premature from 1 lb 12 to just under 5 lb.

Moving on, four out of my six grandchildren were born at Hammersmith Hospital, one granddaughter the consultant discovered on a 24-week scan to have five unbenign tumours on the brain. She is nine now and all the tumours have disappeared thanks to the constant monitoring by University College Hospital UCLH. (*Applause*) Thank you.

The midwifery service at Hammersmith Hospital despite the lack of staff over the years has been exceptional. Unfortunately, the lack of recruitment and removal of bursaries has taken its toll in the UK, also neglect in maternity wards due to birth trauma are on a significant rise. I back Robert's comment and the union's recommendation that we lobby government to make this matter of NHS reform a priority. I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bev. Thank you. Mover of Motion 257, please?

## **RESOLVE THE CRISIS IN CARE**

### **MOTION 257**

#### **257. RESOLVE THE CRISIS IN CARE**

This Congress believes that the crisis in social care is primarily down to low wages and private companies not prepared to increase these higher than the minimum wage. One way the UK Government can address this issue, is to introduce a new tax code to exempt the care sector from paying tax from their meagre earnings. This would provide an incentive for carers to join the sector, work longer hours and work overtime

#### **BLAENAU COUNTY B66 BRANCH**

#### **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Referred)*

REBECCA JONES-WESTCOTT (Wales & South West): Moving on Motion 257. Congress, our social care system is not just creaking, it is on the brink of collapse. Every day dedicated carers, overwhelmingly women, often from working-class backgrounds, hold together the lives of our most vulnerable yet they do so for little more than the minimum wage with private companies refusing to pay a penny more than they have to. This is not just a workforce crisis; it is a moral crisis. There are over 150,000 vacancies in social care and turnover is at 30%. 2 million older people and 1.5 million working age adults are not getting the care they need. Behind these numbers are real people, our parents, our neighbours, our friends left waiting, struggling and sometimes suffering alone. Why? Because care work is undervalued, underpaid and under-respected. Successive Governments have failed to deliver the long-term structural reform our sector so desperately needs. Short-term sticking plasters, fragmented funding and political point-scoring have left care services in crisis. Our

motion calls for a bold practical step, exempting care workers' meagre earnings from tax. This is not a hand-out. It is a recognition. It is an incentive to join and stay in the sector, to work the extra hours our communities desperately need. It is a signal that we value care work as much as any other essential public service.

Congress, this is not just about money. It is about dignity, respect and justice for those who care and for those who are cared for. Let us send a clear message to government. Invest in care, invest in carers and invest in the future of our society. Stand up for carers, stand up for dignity and stand up for a care system worthy of the name. Please, please support the motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Becky. Secunder please?

YVONNE HEALY (Wales & South West): President, Congress. Seconding Motion 257, Resolving the Crisis in Care. We all know someone who has relied on social care, a loved one, a friend or a neighbour. We have seen the difference a compassionate carer makes. We have also seen the toll of poverty pay and relentless pressure that it takes on those workers. Let's be honest, the care sector is being squeezed every side. Rising costs, chronic underfunding and a workforce stretched to breaking point. The Government's own figures show that even with the funding announcement, the sector faces a financial black hole. Providers are closing, waiting lists are growing and care workers are leaving in droves for better pay elsewhere. Our proposal to exempt care workers' earnings from tax is a lifeline. It would put money back in the pockets of those who need it most. It would recruit and retain the skilled compassionate workforce our communities rely on. And it will show finally that we value care as much as we value profit.

Let's be clear, this is not a silver bullet. It is a step towards justice. It is a step towards a care system that works for everyone: for those who give care and for those who receive it. Congress, let's act with compassion and courage. Let's back our carers. Let's resolve this crisis in care. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Yvonne, thank you. Any delegates wish to speak in opposition of these motions? In which case can I ask Geraldine MacVicar from the CEC to give the response and can I have movers and seconders of Motion 251 and Composite 11 to be ready down the front, please.

GERALDINE MACVICAR (CEC): Good morning, President, Congress. Speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motions 250 and 257.

Turning first to Motion 250, GMB supports this important motion which will continue the campaigning for increased funding and reform of maternity services. The qualification is however that GMB cannot appoint a Minister but we can lobby government to do so.

On Motion 257, while there may be a possible outcome of a new code introduction to provide an incentive to join the sector, many of the female workforce in the sector are on universal credit and manage their income through working part time. While the care sector is in crisis for staffing levels, we also recognise that low-paid work occurs in retail and schools and, therefore, the formation of a new tax code focused solely on social care would have an unfair impact on low-paid workers in other sectors. GMB policy is to organise workers out of in-work poverty and to secure a fair pay agreement,

to lobby local authorities to increase funding for social care so that workers receive higher levels of pay for the valuable work they do. A referral would give the CEC the opportunity to talk to organisations such as the Low Pay Commission and its potential impacts and develop appropriate briefings.

Therefore, Congress, we are asking that Motion 250 be supported with a qualification and for Wales & South West region to agree to refer Motion 257. *(Agreed)* Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Geraldine. Does London Region agree to accept the qualification *(Agreed)* Does Wales & South West agree to refer? *(Agreed)* CEC are supporting Motions 240 and 249 I will take those as one. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? They are carried. Motion 250, all those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 257, all those in favour, please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 240 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 249 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 250 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 257 was **REFERRED**.*

THE CHAIRMAN: We move on to more motions relating to healthcare, so could I have the mover of Motion 251 to the rostrum.

## **MANDATORY TRAINING FOR CAREWORKERS ON TRANS HEALTHCARE**

### **MOTION 251**

#### **251. MANDATORY TRAINING FOR CARE WORKERS ON TRANS HEALTHCARE**

This Congress notes that ageing as a trans person comes with unique challenges. In the UK there is no mandatory trans-specific training for care workers about gender identity, meaning there is a lack of understanding or respect about trans people's bodies and needs. Some trans people may also have unsupportive families and fear what they may do when they are too sick to assert themselves, or what might happen to their body once they've died. Even if a trans person officially changes their legal gender their family could still hold a funeral service for them in the wrong name and gender. This Congress therefore calls for:

- Mandatory training to be rolled out to care workers on how to care for trans people
- Protections put in place that allow dignity in dying and the right to a funeral service that respects the gender and name you identify with.

**B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH**

**LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

CRISTINA PICU (London): Good morning, everyone, good morning, President, good morning, Congress. Speaking in full support of Motion 251. Congress, we are seeing a growing community of older trans gender people who deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and understanding, not just in life but in death. Right now, there is no mandatory training for care workers on trans healthcare. That means too many are left without the knowledge or confidence to care for trans residents in ways that honour their identity, their bodies and their needs. We hear too often of trans people forced to hide their identity in life just to feel safe. Some are misgendered in their final days. Some are laid to rest with the wrong name on their headstones. That is not care. That is erasure. Being trans is not about surgery or how someone looks. It is about who someone is and affirming someone's gender. Whether they are trans gender or not, it is about recognising their truth.

Congress, many older trans people have spent decades hiding from discriminatory laws, hostile systems and unsafe services. We have a duty now to build services that are safe, inclusive and proud to be LGBTQ. Mandatory training would give care workers and skills and confidence they need to support residents with compassion and respect and ensure dignity in dying for all. Congress, let's make this GMB commitment, let's make it clear we see our trans elders, we honour them, we will fight for them. Please support the motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cristina. Seconder? (*Formally seconded*) Thank you very much, London.

Mover of Composite 11 then, please.

## **WITHDRAWAL OF ACCESS TO GENDER AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE FOR TRANS AND NON-BINARY WORKERS AND TRANS YOUTH**

### **COMPOSITE 11**

#### **Covering Motions:**

**252. Withdrawal of HRT for Trans & Non-Binary Workers - London Region**

**253. Opposition to Criminalisation of Healthcare for Trans Youth - London Region**

**254. Access to Gender Affirming Care for Trans People - Wales & South West Region**

### **C11. WITHDRAWAL OF ACCESS TO GENDER AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE FOR TRANS & NON BINARY WORKERS AND TRANS YOUTH**

Conference notes since the Cass Report, trans people are having issues with accessing HRT/Care in relation to gender affirmation.

Congress notes that many GPs are now withdrawing access to Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to trans and non-binary people, and they are referring many of these people back to gender specialist clinics, despite already having an official diagnosis of 'gender

dysphoria'. This means that many trans and non binary people are now having to seek alternatives ways of securing HRT resorting to the black market to buy this.

This Congress are deeply disappointed that the UK Labour Government has decided to continue the Tory culture war-based prevention and criminalisation of the prescription of puberty suppressing medicines for young trans people outside of a proposed several year NHS research study, when the same medications have been approved for puberty related issues for non-trans children and young people.

GPs should not be withdrawing or placing barriers to accessing healthcare for trans and non-binary individuals, specifically related to HRT.

Without access to proper healthcare the impact on trans and non-binary worker's well-being, could lead to higher rates of absenteeism or sickness at work due to the stress and challenges of navigating healthcare access.

If someone is unable to continue their treatment, it could impact their ability to express their gender identity comfortably in the workplace, potentially exposing them to discrimination, harassment, mistreatment.

Trans Actual have mounted a legal challenge since the Cass report and the current Labour government is committed to its implementation, despite many academics and medical professionals stating how one-sided it is, and how it is impossible to do double-blind trials. The Council of Europe Experts have recently released a new report on LGBT+ rights in the UK (25/10/2024) and has a list of recommendations for the UK Government, in particular rights for trans and non-binary individuals and refugees as examples.

GMB has written to the secretary of state of health and education previously on the guidance for schools and the impact the Cass Report will have on our members but for children.

Every single person, whether a youth or an adult, across all nations of the UK, should be able to get the care that they need to grow up happy and healthy. To be supported by well trained, knowledgeable professionals who can make the right decisions with them, and who have access to appropriate medical treatments. To not have to wait too long or travel too far. And right now, that simply isn't what's happening for trans and gender diverse young people across the UK. This decision will not make things better and will inevitably result in significant mental health harm to those people and potentially result in some choosing to end their lives rather than go through, to them, the wrong puberty.

The Government is entirely disregarding the voices of trans youth and numerous advocacy groups, who made clear their deep opposition to the restriction of private prescriptions for puberty blockers during consultation. This is particularly concerning given the lack of information about the proposed study and concerns raised about it by the Council of Europe, and the disregarding of significant amounts of research due to, amongst other reasons, not using double-blind processes and control groups, which isn't possible without the unethical provision of placebos for vulnerable young people.

The Government's approach will further harm and alienate trans children and young people and their families, who already experience significant barriers and discrimination when accessing the services that are meant to support them.

This Congress advocates for timely, supportive and holistic healthcare access for all. It is vital the NHS now steps up its efforts to substantially reduce the 6+ year waiting lists for gender transition treatment, through a rapid expansion of youth and adult gender identity services that recognise and support trans people's experiences, including access to puberty suppressing medicines and gender affirming hormones where appropriate.

General practitioners should not be removing the ability for trans people to access HRT safely, especially after they already have a diagnosis and were originally prescribed the HRT by the specialist, and the GP asked to take over. This is unfair and could be seen to be discriminatory

We should not put trans and non-binary people at risk of discrimination or harassment at work because they cannot have access to gender-affirming care through the use of Hormone Replacement Treatment (HRT).

The referrals from GPs back to Gender Clinics for prescriptions will stretch them further and will create a backlog, and make it more difficult for trans and non-binary people to access their medication, often due to the lack of ability to get an appointment with the specialist doctors.

This Congress therefore calls on the CEC to:

- 1) Contact the Labour leadership to demand that medical treatment, including access to puberty blockers, not be withheld to trans youth, given the history of success with their use over decades, and the ability for young people to prove Gillick competency and agree to their own treatment and acknowledgement of risks;
- 2) Work with Labour MPs in Parliament to ensure this is raised as a matter of urgency and ensure trans and non-binary people are not being discriminated against by healthcare professionals
- 3) Contact the leadership of the group of independent MPs convened by Jeremy Corbyn, the suspended Labour MPs, and the leadership of the Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Scottish National Party to discuss how collaborative efforts to advocate for and protect trans youth can be carried out across the progressive parties;
- 4) To consider strengthening any existing campaign to ensure that trans and non-binary people are not discriminated at work as a result of this withdrawal of care.
- 5) To create a campaign to ensure trans people are not discriminated at work
- 6) To work with the TUC LGBTQ+ Committee on this issue to create a campaign
- 7) Contact relevant large LGBTQ+ organisations and charities, such as Stonewall, Equality Network, Mermaids and the Rainbow Project to discuss how GMB can aid with advocacy and support for the LGBTQ+ community, particularly trans and trans youth, from the pressures and attacks on their rights by the increasing hostility from politicians and other groups via the right-wing culture war; and
- 8) Work closely with the LGBTQ+ groups and structures within GMB to work on advocacy and policy regarding the union's support of trans rights, given the long-standing support of the trade union movement of the LGBTQ+ movement, stretching back to the Miners Strikes in the 1980s.

**Moving Region: London Region**

**Seconding Region: Wales & South West Region**

*(Carried)*

JORDAN MILLWARD (London): President, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Moving Composite Motion 11. Across the UK, trans and non-binary people are facing hard opposition to accessing basic essential healthcare. Since the Cass Review many GPs have withdrawn from providing gender-affirming care like HRT, even when patients have a formal diagnosis and a treatment plan from a specialist. This forces patients into expensive private care, over-stretched gender

clinics or the grey online market to self-medicate because they feel it is the only option to get the treatment that they need. For young people it is even worse. The prescription of puberty blockers has been banned outside of clinical trials despite decades of safe use for both trans and non-trans children.

This decision ignores the voices of trans youth and their families and disregards the ethical concerns raised about conducting double blind trials on time-sensitive treatments for those going through puberty. Real lives are being upended by these policies. One, Emily noted in the *Independent* in December last year, was cut off from NHS HRT prescriptions and told to go private as her GP could “no longer legally support prescription or monitoring of this ‘specialist drug’.” Another, a trans who got their diagnosis privately and had been on HRT through the NHS for two years, was cut off and told his choices were private prescriptions or referral to the NHS gender clinics for an NHS diagnosis where there is an estimated wait time of eight years. No one, regardless of their circumstances, should have to wait for any medical treatment for eight years. Having spoken and got permission to raise this as well, personally, for the first 14 years of my relationship with my partner, I was proud to be stepfather to a wonderful lad called Kyle. A year or so ago when she came out as trans I became the proud stepfather of a wonderful girl called Hannah. Her identity is valid. (*Applause*) She deserves to know that she is loved and deserves to know that not just me but the union movement will never stop supporting her and fighting for her rights. She is entitled as are all trans people to prompt and accessible gender-affirming care. The General Medical Council says the provision of HRT prescriptions to trans people is not a specialised area and requires no specialised expertise. Apparently, Dame Hillary and the Government know better.

This is all part of a general erosion of the rights of minority groups. The same forces restricting trans healthcare are part of a broader right-wing culture war against human equality and dignity. If we allow these roll-backs to continue it will not stop with them because those who hold these views never stop. They will just move to another minority and then another.

Comrades, please support this motion and continue to show that the union movement opposes division of the working class and stands in solidarity with our LGBT brothers, sisters and siblings. There is no LGB without the T and there is no working class without solidarity. Comrades, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jordan. Secunder from Wales & South West.

JEFFREY SUTTON (Wales & South West): President, Congress, from the amazing Wales & South West, seconding Composite 11. Congress, you heard my colleague speak not just about healthcare or policy but about human dignity, about the right of every single person to be treated with respect, with compassion and with fairness, values that our movement have always stood for and must never walk away from.

Congress, in the wake of the Cass Report our trans and non-binary community are facing renewed barriers in accessing the care they need to lead healthy authentic lives. We have seen GPs refuse to continue prescribing hormone replacement therapy even when diagnosis already exists. This is not just bad healthcare; it is discrimination in practice. Let's call this what it is: a continuation of the culture war waged on marginalised people, now dressed up in a lab coat and policy papers. When a Labour Government continues a policy born from cruelty under the Tories, we have to ask what

are they doing? The facts are plain. The same puberty blockers now criminalised for trans youth can still be prescribed for non-trans children facing early puberty. The double standard is shameful. And we know what this means: young people unable to access care, adults forced on to black market hormones, risking their health to simply be themselves.

The Council of Europe, international human rights experts and medical professionals across the board have condemned this approach. So must we. Congress, this is not just about healthcare. It is about rights, dignity and survival. We in the union movement have always stood with the marginalised. From standing shoulder to shoulder with LGBT troops during the miners' strike, in fighting for equal pay, equal rights and equal dignity at work, our values are clear. Now when trans people are under attack we must be just as clear. We demand that trans youth have access to the care they need. GPs are under a duty of care and should not abandon trans people. No trans worker should face discrimination in the workplace. Above all, we demand that trans and non-binary people are treated with the same humanity, the same respect and the same rights as every one of us. Let's be a movement that turns the tide, that remembers our proud history and writes the next chapter with courage, compassion and clarity. Support this motion. Stand up for trans and non-binary people. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jeff. I do not see anyone wanting to speak in opposition, so I will ask Dawn Lovatt from the CEC to take the rostrum and give our reply. Could I ask movers of Motions 166, 167, 168 and 170 to come down to the front.

DAWN LOVATT (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Composite 11 which we are supporting with a qualification. Thank you

to the branches for the motions. Solidarity with trans and non-binary people is an important and long-held GMB policy which these motions build on. We take this opportunity to reiterate our solidarity with our trans members as well as union members who are parents and relatives of young trans people. Our qualification is that we are not experts in this very specialist subject and quickly developing areas of medicine so we would not be able to give informed comment on each area. However, we can continue to call on the Government to ensure that trans and non-binary people of all ages, including children, can access the evidence-based NHS treatment they need, including HRT, promptly, locally and without right-wing political interference.

We have an existing workplace rights campaign for a trans and non-binary equality at work toolkit, with a four-hour training session available. We ask branches to strengthen this campaign by getting in touch with the National Office for support in using the toolkit in GMB-organised workplaces. Politically, GMB works with and influences both through government and through the GMB group of MPs who are Labour members. We do not typically seek to work with other parties or groups. Our work with LGBTQ+ sector organisations will be primarily channelled through the TUC LGBTQ+ Committee and its Trades Unions for Trans & Non-Binary Rights Alliance. GMB will continue to advocate in this area with our LGBTQ+ plus activists in line with our expertise in power in the workplace. Please support with this qualification.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Dawn. Do London and Wales & South West accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you very much. Motion 251 CEC are supporting. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Composite 11 please show. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 251 was **CARRIED***

*Composite Motion 11 was **CARRIED**.*

## **Industrial & Economic Policy: Public Section**

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We now move to continue with public sector motions.

Could I have the mover of 166? Is there a mover for 166, London Region?

A SPEAKER: It is out of order.

THE PRESIDENT: It is out of order on my page as well now. Could I have the mover of 167 then, please?

## **CARE HOMES**

### **MOTION 167**

#### **167. CARE HOMES**

This Congress believes that social care and care homes should be properly funded and that care workers should be fairly paid. The Government should sanction Councils that close their care homes without respect for human rights of the residents because closure of a care home can affect the wellbeing of the residents and their right to life.

**K17 KINGS LYNN BRANCH  
LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ALAN LAW (London): Morning Congress, President. Alan, moving Motion 167, Care Homes. Congress, we bring your attention to ongoing problems with care homes. NorseCare is a company owned by Norfolk County Council. A few months ago, it announced it was closing Linden Court in Watton, Norfolk. Last year the firm also

closed Springdale in Brundall near Norwich in Norfolk and Burnham House in Terrington St John, King's Lynn, also in Norfolk. This sparks concerns about the future of the remaining care services in the county. The closures are attributed to factors such as changes to fire regulations, rising social care costs and the need for substantial investments to adapt buildings for increasingly complex care needs. The Government advised as long ago as 2006 that it should be possible under normal operating conditions to evacuate any given protected area in two and a half minutes. Mr Gough, the Head of Prevention and Protection for Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, said it was a legal requirement that all staff were able to evacuate people safely according to government guidelines.

With government funding constantly being reduced to local councils, this in turn adds huge pressures on all the departments within local government. This will see all aspects of caring departments suffer from a lack of money. Lack of investment in staff education and infrastructure makes it hard for care homes to survive. We the GMB need to put pressure on this Government to encourage care systems to be properly funded. Seeing in local media how much it affects residents when their home is closed is upsetting to say the least. Also, the effect it has on well-being. The Government, county council and borough council must work together to fund and find the best way forward. This nation of ours is living much longer, and these problems will not go away. You cannot hide them in the cupboard. With the right funding, organising and staffing care homes will have to be a priority of the future. Let's make no mistake, if we do not do it right other departments will suffer greatly at a much higher cost. The recent minimum wage has gone up. Congress, care workers are worth much more than the minimum wage. (*Applause*) Carers will become the future employers in most towns and cities. The Government of the future must make sure carers are paid a fair wage

for the amazing work they do. You never know when your loved ones will need them. Our population is growing; our care and support must grow with it. Congress, I move.  
(Applause)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Alan. Secunder?

CLIFF RONEY (London): Good morning, President, Congress, brothers, sisters, seconding Motion 167, Care Homes. We need to shout from the rooftops about how important carers and care homes are going to be in the future. We are living longer and this has created huge pressure on carers and care homes. As my colleague has just mentioned in his motion, residents will need looking after, which means funding has to be made available. We must care for the elderly! (Applause) At present vulnerable people often do not get a choice in which care homes they are going into, often miles away from their family and friends and care groups. They have physical challenges. The care homes they are in often closing without family or friends to be around them. Who knows where this is going to lead for the future. We must care for the elderly! (Applause) Retirement age will continue to rise, forcing the elderly to work and survive financially. I say that at a time when the Government did not feel any emotion when they took away the heating allowance. Keir Starmer won't be turning down the thermostat, will he? (Cries of "No!") They have as much right to a good life as everybody else does. We must care for the elderly! (Cries of "Hooray!") They need reassuring when they move into care homes of basic needs, i.e., safety, well-being, nutrition, comfort. In Norfolk and other parts of East Anglia, there have been a number of care homes that have closed. This cannot be right. Care homes of today must be brought up to the high standards. They must in every single way include all the health and safety and all the risks must be covered. They must carry on investing in people

and equipment. We cannot become short-sighted. My children Kayleigh and Paula, my grandchildren Henry and Logan should not have to be worrying about paying for care in the future. This is not a problem for tomorrow. It is a problem for today. Congress, please get behind this. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Cliff. Motion 168?

## **CUTS TO POLICE STAFF**

### **MOTION 168**

#### **168. CUTS TO POLICE STAFF**

This Congress notes

1. Police forces across the country are set to lose large numbers of officers and staff due to continuing cuts across the service.
2. Met Police are predicted to lose 2,300 officers, Lincolnshire Police are predicted to lose 400, and Essex Police are predicted to lose 200.
3. Police forces are predicting budget shortfalls of £10m or more across the country.
4. Police officers are resigning in record numbers (5,151 leaving between March 2023 and March 2024).

This branch believes:

Such cuts represent an unacceptable continuation of the austerity seen under the Conservative government, leading to poorer service levels, increased police response time, and increased levels of crime in communities. In addition, increasing pressure on remaining officers will increase already high numbers of officers resigning, further compounding these issues.

The Labour government has made much of increasing the numbers of officers but appears to be continuing with cuts set by the previous government. These cuts place officers' well-being at risk, leading to diminishing satisfaction and increasing rates of mental illness.

This branch therefore calls upon the Labour Party to:

- Commit to addressing funding shortfalls, ensuring that police forces do not face budget shortfalls and thus declining numbers of officers
- Call upon the government to create better support for officers
- Call upon the government to further fund police forces, to restore police strength and thus, the safety of ourselves and our communities.

## **GMP1 GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE BRANCH**

### **NORTH WEST AND IRISH REGION**

*(Carried)*

ISLAMIAT ONIGBANJO (North West & Irish): Good morning, President, Congress, comrades, friends. I am speaking on Motion 168, Cuts to Police Staff. Second-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, successive Governments have failed to invest in policing adequately. To be totally honest, what is happening to our Police Service right now is nothing short of a crisis. We are seeing large numbers of police officers and police staff being cut. The Met has lost up to 2,300 officers, Lincoln has lost up to 400 officers, Essex 200 roles, just to name a few. The cuts do not only affect police officers, they impact hard-working diligent police staff, too. The cuts affect the PCSOs, the call handlers, the forensics teams, the admin staff: the very people who keep the whole system running. Ask yourself a question: what will happen when they go? Crime goes up. Response times go down. Communities feel less safe. The people left behind, those still doing the job, are facing burn-out. We are losing officers on the beat, the ones who know the streets, that keep them safe. We are losing PCSOs, who are the bridge between the police and the community. We are losing the back office staff behind the scenes who ensure justice works. This is not just about numbers. It is about lives. It is about safety. It is about trust. Let's be clear, the lack of investment

started under the Tories, but the Labour Government has not stopped the decline. They are talking a good talk but the cuts are still happening.

So, here is what I believe. Congress, we should be saying loud and clear, this GMB Congress demands that the Labour Party step up, fix the funding shortfall, support all police staff, not just police officers but everyone who makes policing possible, invest in rebuilding our Police Service so they are safe and fully staffed. We are reasonable people. We are not asking for miracles. We are asking for commitment, for action from a Government that backs the people who keep our communities safe.

Finally, I would like the motion to be a catalyst for change to drive the investment agenda forward. I would like GMB to lobby the relevant MPs to place this discussion on the agenda as part of the new spending review. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you colleague. Secunder? *(Formally seconded)* Mover of 170.

## **END TO PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEMES**

### **MOTION 170**

#### **170. END TO PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEMES**

This Congress recognises the need for GMB to lobby the Government with a view to ending the use of Primary Authority Schemes. The Primary Authority system has had a negative impact on workers protections and serves as a block on much needed enforcement action. It allows a Private Sector business to pay a sole local authority for guidance on matters of Health and Safety. Other regulators and local authorities are then obligated to follow this guidance. The outcome is a system of regulatory capture whereby businesses are free to shop around for their preferred

Primary Authority. Champions of the scheme will often cite lack of enforcement activity as a success yet neglect to mention it actively places a block on enforcement. A 2019 survey by the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health found that 62% of Environmental Health Practitioners within enforcing authorities felt that the schemes were not working to protect the public. Amongst the first to sign up to these schemes were our Supermarkets. For those of us at ASDA we have seen a sharp decline within our H&S culture during this time. Risk Assessments are poorly briefed, hazardous equipment is waved through, and meaningful consultation is becoming increasingly difficult. It is of the utmost importance that the government acts now to tackle this crisis in enforcement.

## **A62 ASDA BRANCH**

### **NORTH WEST AND IRISH REGION**

*(Carried)*

MARCIA JOHNSON (North West & Irish): Good morning, President, Chair, Congress. I am here to move to motion End Primary Authority Schemes. This motion calls for a return to meaningful, independent regulatory oversight of health and safety issues within workplaces, specifically those overseen by local authorities. Currently, as it stands, the Health and Safety Executive is the only enforcing authority for workplaces that have been deemed high risk. The remaining 1.6 million workplaces fall under the remit of the local authority.

The Primary Authority Scheme was originally introduced to simplify regulation for businesses who operate across multiple locations and therefore multiple local authorities across the UK. Under this arrangement, a business can form a partnership with a single local authority, a primary authority, to receive assured advice on regulation that the other local regulators are then expected to honour. For example,

Asda, my employer has an agreement with Wakefield Council under this scheme. The primary authority is paid by business. Promises are made to reduce liabilities and a block is placed on all other local authorities intervening on these decisions. Coupled with this employer-friendly arrangement, there is a concerning lack of enforcement, which has only got worse as the scheme has expanded. This puts our members at risk. Between 2009 and 2020 under this scheme enforcement notices from local authorities fell by 67%. When issues arise the primary authority is the one taking charge. Essentially, they are marking their own homework. This not only affects enforcement notices but also prosecutions.

In 2010, 284 prosecutions were bought by local authorities. By 2020 that number had fallen to 55. This results in a two-tier system whereby wealthy employers were able to block the involvement of a local authority who have legitimate concerns. Decisions should be made at a local level. How is it right that if I have an issue in my store in Barrow, the local authority, Westmorland and Furness Council, are bound by a decision made 100 miles away by Wakefield Council? They probably could not even tell you where Barrow was on a map. Meanwhile practical inspections have fared even worse, falling 97% between 2010 and 2016. This is a problem, as health and safety concerns can be downplayed as a primary authority has previously signed off on these procedures.

This is an issue we are fighting as reps for our own Asda members. In 2020, Asda introduced a new 10-tote trolley, used by the home shopping pickers, which was taller and heavier than the trollies used by competitors. It has directly resulted in members suffering musculoskeletal injuries. Only after an organised effort from the GMB members and reps did Asda agree to a review. Efforts to involve the primary authority

fell flat, as they had worked hand in glove with Asda to introduce the trolleys in the first place and no other local authority could override this.

Congress, primary authority schemes mean far fewer employers are being brought to justice. There has been no fall in injury or health statistics during this time so it cannot be attributed to fewer employers putting their workforce at risk, but it can be attributed to the way that primary authorities are being manipulated. Therefore, Congress, I ask you to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Melissa. Secunder?

PATRICK TIMPSON (North West & Irish): Seconding Motion 170. Congress, it is said that primary authority schemes save British business £50 million a year, but this is a drop in the ocean next to the £100 billion business losses through sickness, the two major causes being stress and musculoskeletal injuries. It is clear that compliance within the workplace is integral, not just to our members' well-being but also reducing costs. Primary authority schemes lack both the teeth and the will to tackle health and safety issues and protect our members. Even the ability to charge rogue employers for the time and resource of health and safety professionals is absent. Where a breach is found, the HSE are able to charge £129 an hour for return visits, report writing and getting specialist advice. Local authorities meanwhile have no such powers. It is of course possible to challenge a primary authority who you believe is making an error in law. However, the Government's own report into this is damning, stating that the ability to challenge the primary authority's view is severely curtailed in practice. We simply do not have the resource to pursue this other than in the most serious cases. This is not necessarily good for good regulation and for ensuring compliance.

Congress, we are in agreement that streamlining advice is an understandable and even commendable aim. However, the money saved by employers is not being invested back into health and safety. We have seen this at Asda, who first abandoned their first auditing processes, before removing admin managers and HR managers. The outcome was GMB members taking health and safety matters into their own hands, taking action and forcing the company to act. This year Asda responded by hiring an external company to complete workplace audits, but we have to ask the question, where was the primary authority during this period? Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Patrick. Can I now ask Gwylan Brinkworth to respond on behalf of the CEC. Can I also ask those who are moving and seconding motions 175, 176 and 177 to come to the front, please.

GWYLAN BRINKWORTH (CEC): Responding on behalf of the CEC. On Motion 167, the CEC agrees the best practice is for social care to be kept under local authority control as this delivers the best terms, conditions, training and safety standards in comparison to the wild west of the private sector. The qualification to this motion is that GMB@Work organising strategy is the best way to deal with matters raised in the motion. A strategy which brings workers and communities together would be a more effective way of shaming local authorities into keeping their care homes open or bringing services back in house alongside making improvements to terms and conditions of our members.

Finally on Motion 168, although headed Cuts to Police Staff, the motion mainly refers to police officers. Our qualification is that our efforts will be focused on police staff as

officers are not in our membership. We have recently written to the Home Secretary seeking assurance that any rise in police officer numbers is matched by a rise in police staff numbers and also the police staff are protected from the ongoing decivilianisation of their roles. Congress, please support Motions 167 and 168 with the qualifications I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Gwylan. Does London agree on the qualification on 167? (*Agreed*) Does North West & Irish agree on the qualification on 168? (*Agreed*) All those in favour of 167, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 168, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 170, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 167 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 168 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 170 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Could I now have the mover of 175 to the rostrum, please?

ALEX HITTER (Southern): President, Congress, South London Universities Branch. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am moving Motion 175, Vice Chancellors' Pay. Universities across the country are facing financial challenges, almost all instituting budget restraint in some form or other, with some taking more drastic action, cutting courses and jobs. One expenditure seemingly not under review is pay for vice chancellors. Average vice-chancellors' pay reached £340,000 per year in 2025 according to the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. At the university I work at the ratio of the vice-chancellor's pay to the median pay of the rest of the workforce

rose between 2022 and 2023 from 680% of the average salary to 740% of the average salary. And these figures do not include hourly paid staff who make up the bulk of the academic and much of the support and technical workforce and who are employed vicariously on contracts that can change at the discretion of the employer and offer no guarantee of work beyond the end of each academic year.

Universities rely on tuition fees for funding. The shortfall in many universities' budgets is forcing them to prioritise international students ahead of home ones as they can charge them double the standard fee which are already set to rise for the first time since 2017 to £9,535 per year from the beginning of the academic year 2025-26. However, the Government's change to immigration policy have made our universities a less attractive prospect for international students. The only solution therefore will be to raise fees even further so both home and international opportunity will be paying more.

Earlier this year at the university I work at after announcing financial control measures to curb expenditure, when the Vice-Chancellor was asked about the possibility of a freeze on increases to the salaries of senior staff, especially her own, she said it "would be considered". Meanwhile a voluntary severance scheme was announced for the rest of the staff. Naturally vice-chancellors cutting their salaries would not be nearly enough to make up the shortfall that many universities are seeing. However, high pay for vice-chancellors is always justified as it is in any industry with the assertion that it will attract top talent but given how many vice-chancellors are failing in their leadership, for example by choosing to pursue desperate dice roll vanity projects aimed at attracting overseas students such as overseas or London campuses without success and at the expense of the staff without whom the universities they lead would not be able to operate, is it unreasonable for staff to question the quality of the talent these

inflated salaries pay for? I therefore call on Congress to put whatever pressure it can on universities to halt the spiralling pay of university vice-chancellors. Thank you.  
(*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Alex. Secunder?

ABIODUN OMOTOSO (Southern): President, Congress, first first-time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) Our universities rely on public funding and student tuition fees. When our universities are facing financial pressures such as cuts in government funding, rising student debt or even staff layoffs, but our vice-chancellors' pay keeps on rising up while the universities are freezing pay for the rest of their staff. Is this fair? Certainly not. That is not just unfair, it is unacceptable. Everyone should be treated the same.

Universities are increasingly being run like businesses. This has led to criticism that universities are now focused on profit rather than education. It was reported that a vice-chancellor earns £400,00 while other workers are feeling the effects of austerity. They should be transparency and accountability in vice-chancellors' pay. Everyone deserves the dignity of decent wages. I support, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you. Mover of 177, please. Sorry 176, I apologise for that.

## **INVEST IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **MOTION 176**

#### **176. INVEST IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

This Congress asks the GMB to campaign for investment in the Higher Education sector in the form of increased funding for staff across the sector and government grants to improve funding for disadvantaged students.

Context –

The current financial crisis in the higher education sector jeopardizes proposed government plans to promote economic growth and the prospects of our most disenfranchised youth.

Examples –

Despite making significant economic contributions as a world-leading industry the sector has faced a myriad of visa restrictions jeopardizes the successful implementation of the government's industry strategy

Provide evidence –

Quote – “The higher education sector contributed an enormous £265 billion to the UK economy”

The Higher Education sector is worth investing in. We can't afford to allow it to continue sliding into decline.

**X96 SOUTH LONDON UNIVERSITIES BRANCH  
SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

ALEX HITTER (Southern): I am doing both of them, so no harm done. President, Congress, I am from South London Universities Branch, moving Motion 176, Invest in Higher Education. As I have mentioned, there is a financial crisis affecting the higher education sector and I urge Congress to call on the Government to act. We have seen grim announcements about cutting courses from the Universities of Dundee, Cardiff, Durham and East Anglia, to name but a few, and with these cut courses jobs are set to be lost as well. According to the *Guardian*, as many as 10,000 jobs could be at risk across the sector. Some areas, such as Cardiff will be left without local options for vital courses. Cardiff will be losing its nursing course from the academic year 25-26.

There is also a disproportionate effect on courses which are not seen as essential like those in the arts and humanities. Particularly affected is the offer of courses to study

music with the end of music provision at the universities of area of Oxford Brookes, Roehampton and Wolverhampton from 2025. For the government not to step in to support such courses which are a prerequisite for a flourishing arts and entertainment industry is shortsighted at best. For more than two decades universities have been forced to run as if they are businesses, with government funding gradually taken away and universities expected to fund themselves almost entirely off the backs of the increasing fees they charge their students, many of whom are now questioning the value for money of the courses they have worked hard to be able to enrol onto. Universities are forced to prioritise attempting to increase student numbers while the ruthless business orientated leadership model forces cuts to staff, facilities and equipment to stay afloat. As a result student satisfaction is rapidly going downhill, as are applications to study at our higher education institutions, and with that the fees that make up the majority of our universities' funding are in decline. The attitude of cramming students in and teaching them on the cheap risks jeopardising the Government's own industry strategy as it hopes these problems will just go away in a sector which has been estimated at being worth as much as £265 billion to the UK economy and which, as I say, is now facing a crisis.

Historically, higher education has driven social mobility. Until the imposition of tuition fees, working-class people could attend university for free alongside those from more privileged backgrounds. The implementation of tuition fees, which first came shamefully under a Labour Government and which were then tripled by the Coalition Government in 2012, and the disadvantageous terms and conditions of the Plan 2 student loan scheme, mean that higher education is now less accessible to students from working-class and lower-income backgrounds, and less worthwhile for those from those backgrounds who are able to access it.

I therefore urge Congress to call on the Government to view how it funds this vital sector which provides much-needed education, training and skills for industries that are crucial to the UK's future economic growth and how it supports both those who work and study in higher education. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Alex. Secunder?

ABIODUN OMOTOSU (Southern): President, Congress, seconding Motion 176. Investing in higher education can offer a return both personally and economically. As most institutions are cutting staff and the Government are reducing their funding, this has led to a loss of jobs and unemployment rates going up in the country. Institutions are not able to carry out their tasks and new courses are not introduced due to insufficient funds. But if there was adequate funding in all our higher education, it would make our education more attractive to all students from lower incomes, promoting social mobility. It can lead to increased earnings and reducing unemployment, as well, as we all know, education plays a crucial role in providing life-long learning opportunities for individuals in all set-ups. I support the motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

## **SENIOR LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **MOTION 177**

#### **177. SENIOR LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

This congress is concerned about the growth of senior leadership roles in the higher education sector. The number of senior leadership roles in higher education institutions have been rising in recent years; a symptom of austerity measures and the subsequent financial crisis in the sector.

The consequences of which hit the least secure and least paid, threatening the profession at the very heart of the sector, teaching. In contrast the growing senior leadership roles remain secure. Their growth in numbers mirrors a growth in pay which has continued despite attempts to curb them, such as the woefully inadequate voluntary code, introduced in 2018. The combination of their ever-increasing percentage of the overall workforce as well as pay spells disaster for the sector.

In 2025 educational institutions are still providing hefty salaries to senior leaders, attracting the likes of Rishi Sunak, who has taken on what's been described as a 'prestigious' senior role at Oxford earlier this year.

Congress asks the GMB to implement long-term measures to monitor and curb the growing number of senior leadership roles in higher education.

## **X96 SOUTH LONDON UNIVERSITIES BRANCH**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Mover of 177. While they are coming up, could I just ask those who are waiting to speak at the front to please ensure not to talk whilst delegates are speaking at the rostrum, as it is very disturbing, and can we try and keep noise to a minimum in the hall too.

ALEX HITTER (Southern): Just one more from me. Southern Region, South London Universities Branch, moving Motion 177, Senior Leadership in Higher Education.

Despite the financial hardships many universities are facing we have seen a proliferation of senior management roles which offer little apparent value to the average front-line worker. At the university I work at from 2022-23 there was an increase in

those earning salaries over £100,000 a year from 14 to 27. Last year the head of our HR department left. It was announced that she would not be replaced and that her work would be taken on by an existing senior manager. This left many of us on the ground wondering how much work either of them could actually have been doing in the first place. In the last two weeks it has been announced that two further senior managers are leaving, each of whom headed up departments who were both expensive and unpopular as they were both seen by many as being surplus to requirements, and one of them is a restructure programme that has left many staff fearful of the prospect of further redundancies. Both departments' projects are yet to be completed and neither of these managers are being replaced, so presumably the projects are being abandoned having wasted money and upset staff. It was not surprising that when the announcements were made to inform staff that these managers were leaving comments were turned off. These projects also come at a time when the joint trade unions at my university have been pressuring the university to end the scandal of outsourced facilities, cleaning and catering staff, only to be told that the university lacked staff with the expertise to bring these vital services back in-house.

The university I work at is not the only one where the value for money of senior management staff has come into question. It was reported in *Private Eye* that senior staff at the University of West Scotland took a combined total of 120 flights to the university's London campus last year, although that is down from 200 in 2023. This despite a challenging financial environment that may entail staff cuts. The proliferation of senior staff roles, which often contribute only to vanity projects, is a waste of the tuition fees students are paying, and which are set to rise by 3.1% as at the next academic year. I therefore urge Congress to put what pressure it can on universities to

reconsider both the number and roles of senior management staff at universities. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Alex. Secunder?

TINA DAVIES (Southern): Seconding Motion 177. The unchecked growth of senior leadership roles in higher education is not just a concern, it is a crisis that undermines our academic institutions. Over the past decade we have seen an explosion in senior leadership positions, pro-vice chancellors, deputy deans, strategic transformations - sorry, darlings but here we go, directors - titles that multiply while front-line teaching staff face pay freezes, casual contracts, and constant pressure to do more with less. Meanwhile the salaries for these senior posts often reach six-figure sums with added perks that stand in stark contrast to the insecurity faced by lecturers, support staff and researchers. Education is being treated like a business. This is not about envy, it is about priorities. When institutions plead poverty while continuing to expand their executive roles, they reveal a system skewed in favour of their hierarchy - I cannot pronounce it but you know what I mean - over humanity. The introduction of the 2018 voluntary code to curb excessive senior pay was a smokescreen, it was never binding, and it has failed. The appointment of high-profile individuals such as - and some people are not going to like this, I always call him Fishy Sunak - to a prestigious role at Oxford only reinforces the message: leadership is rewarded while work is disregarded.

We have to challenge the narrative that senior management deserves ever-increasing rewards while those who teach, support and care for students are told to tighten their

belts. The soul of higher education is not found in a boardroom. It is in the lecture hall, the lab, the library.

THE CO-CHAIR: Can you wind up now, please, Tina.

TINA DAVIES: Support this motion. Let's demand meaningful long-term oversight and a return to fairness in our universities. Education is not for profit, it is a right, not a product. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Tina. Does anyone wish to speak against any of the motions? No. Can I now call Dave Flannagan to give the qualification for the CEC and ask the movers and seconders of 179, 189 and 191 come to the front, please.

DAVE FLANNAGAN (CEC): Good morning, Congress. North West & Irish Region, speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 175 and 177, which we are supporting with qualifications.

On Motion 175, we thank the branch for highlighting the financial crisis that many universities are in. Many also have plans for redundancies, severance schemes and recruitment pauses. In 2024, some universities deferred pay rises for staff for 11 months for financial reasons. Pay for HE employees is determined by collective bargaining but vice-chancellor pay is set by the governing body of each institution. Universities are not seen as part of the public sector and have charitable status. Our short qualification is that vice-chancellors are employed on an individual contract and neither the Minister for Higher Education or the Secretary of State currently has the ability to intervene.

On Motion 177, there has been an increase in the number of senior leaders but there is an absence of evidence. As a cost-saving measure the last Government closed the Higher Education Statistics Authority in 2023 which used to produce information on staffing. Our qualification is that GMB may not have the resources to monitor the sector in the way that the motion wants, but we will endeavour to organise workers to build our collective strength in the sector. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 175 and 177 with the qualifications I have outlined. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, David. Does Southern agree the qualifications on 175 and 177? *(Agreed)* All those in favour of 175, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 167, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 177, please show. Any against? That is carried.

## **EXPAND THE “SICK OF SSP” CAMPAIGN THROUGHOUT THE SOCIAL CARE SECTOR**

### **MOTION 179**

#### **179. EXPAND THE SICK OF SSP CAMPAIGN THROUGH OUT THE SOCIAL CARE SECTOR**

This Congress feels that we should take this opportunity to build on the hugely successful campaign we had for our HC One members in 2024. HC One now pay SSP from day one. This campaign showed us through growth in membership and the positive engagement we received from our members throughout HC One that this issue is very important to our members working in the Social care sector especially given that we are still in the midst of a cost of living crisis. This campaign has so far only been launched in HC One, covering 19,500 workers - however care - as a standard does not receive SSP from day one.

We know that less than 3% of our membership who work within the Care Sector don't receive sick pay entitlements other than SSP.

This motion asks GMB to support the expansion and organising agenda of the sick of SSP campaign nationally, into the Social Care Sector as a whole and not just within HC One.

### **N39 DURHAM AND TEES HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

#### **NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Could the mover of Motion 179 please come to the rostrum.

JACQUELINE KITCHEN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Vice-President, Congress, a proud member of North East, Yorkshire & Humber moving Motion 179.

*(Applause)* As a care worker and a late carer for HC-One in Durham. Just in case I am not busy enough I also sit on the National Negotiating Committee for pay talks and any other issues and the National Care Committee. *(Applause)*

Around five years ago, the country went into lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic. In my care home in Durham we kept the virus at bay till the May that year. Then we got our first positive case. It overwhelmed us and out of 87 residents, 67 of those tested positive and we ended up losing, sadly, 27 of those. Of course we also had a high percentage of staff tested positive. As low-paid and front-line workers, our only saving grace was that due to government funding we were paid a full wage so at least we did not have to worry about paying the bills. This rug was pulled from under us, however, in June 2022 when government funding stopped. We asked why, Covid was still out there, but obviously the last two years meant nothing to our client care provider. It was back to basic SSP pay and three work non-days. No more claps for our services. No

more fair sick pay. A member survey for pay talks highlighted this was a priority issue for our members. Planning meetings took place and the 'Sick of SSP' campaign was launched. Our asks were simple: sign the petition, wear a sticker and have your photograph taken to show your support. In a six-week period we got over 2,000 signatures and we recruited a massive 630 new members, all keen to have their voices heard. (*Applause*) We even delivered the petition to HC-One's head office for maximum effect. Our offer came in and a ballot accepted this by 54% and we won SSP from day one for 19,500 staff. This was a landmark win in one of the biggest care companies in the UK.

In 2024 the pay talks started again and the members again prioritised sick pay and the Sick of SSP campaign was reignited. The petition this year was replaced with a sick note, letting HC-One know that staff were still sick of SSP but this year we asked for £40 a day for the first three days. Pay talks commenced and as part of our final offer we were offered £40 a day effective from 1st October this year. This was accepted by 90% of our members. We again recruited many new members this year. I do not know exact figures, I am sorry, but we also recruited 10 new prospective reps.

Sick pay is a vital condition that is essential in the care sector, not only for the carers but for those we care for too. Every year we win more because we can show that workers are engaged in the campaign. It is something they want and they are not afraid to show it. There is strength in numbers and without those care workers joining together we give care companies the message that we are happy with the status quo. We certainly are not. This campaign shows that with easy actions you can send a message that employers can't ignore. Just by signing a petition ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Can you wind up now, please, Jacqueline.

JACQUELINE KITCHEN: Yes, I will be two seconds. We can secure sick pay for 19,500 workers. You can do it too. As care workers we are undervalued, underestimated and underpaid. Sick pay is a right ---

THE CO-CHAIR: No more time.

JACQUELINE KITCHEN: So Congress, please support your care workers, demand fair pay for all care workers to make this national campaign. By sticking together and fighting back we can make a difference to hundreds and thousands more care workers in this country. I move. (*Applause*) Thank you, Jacqueline. Secunder?

MICHELLE HUNT (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Vice-President, from the great big North East, Yorkshire & Humber region. (*Applause*) In my role as a retail rep for Asda I look after hundreds of members. These members do not get access to SSP for three days regardless of their length of service, health condition or family experiences, and of course, similar to the care sector, we are predominantly female workers. For years the union movement has worked to improve the lives of working people. The disgrace of a two tier system of sick pay is the fight of today. Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

## **FAIR DEALS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS AND MPs**

### **MOTION 189**

#### **189. FAIR DEALS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS AND MP'S**

This Congress supports parity of cost of living pay increases to Civil Servants and Members of Parliament as they are both servants of the public and are both paid for from the public purse. The notion that a cost of living pay award is different for MP's than for civil servants is essentially and fundamentally unfair.

## **W27 TOLPUDDLE BRANCH**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Mover of 189?

MARZENA ZBOROWSKA HUGGETT (Southern) Hello again. Southern Region, Merton Branch. Motion 189 - Fair Deals for Civil Servants. Congress, President, I move Motion 189 because it speaks to a fundamental issue: fairness. MPs and civil servants are both public servants. Both are paid from the public purse, yet when it comes to the cost of living pay awards, they are treated entirely differently. And it is time we called that out.

In February 2025, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority announced a 2.8% pay rise for MPs. Meanwhile many civil servants - our GMB members - are still facing low, capped or even zero increases. When they do get a rise it often comes with a catch - give up overtime rights, sacrifice holidays or change allowances. This is not just a pay gap. It is a respect gap. Since 2011 MPs no longer vote on their own pay. The IPSA now sets it and since 2015 it has been linked to average public sector pay. But here is the problem, civil servants do not get those averages. Their pay is negotiated department by department under strict Treasury guidance and any increases often come at a cost. Civil servants are the people who staff borders, run the justice system, process

benefits, keep government functioning. They are dedicated, professional, stretched. And they have spent the last decade managing cuts, pay freezes and raising workloads. Meanwhile MPs enjoy automatic stable above inflation increases without negotiation, without delay.

This motion does not call for special treatment; it calls for equal treatment. If MPs can have dependable cost of living pay increases, so should the civil servants who support the country every day. The CEC rightly notes that MP pay is now set by an independent body but that is no reason for us to stay silent on unfairness facing our members. We should be demanding a fair consistent system for civil servants too, one that does not force them to give up hard-won terms just to keep up with inflation. We are not saying cut MPs' pay. We are saying if it is good enough for them, it is good enough for us. Congress, support fairness. Support our Civil Service members. Support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Seconder?

CHARLOTTE LUNN (Southern): I know it is going to say Charlotte but you all know me as Charlie. Charlie Lunn, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, I rise to second the Motion 189 Fair Deals for Civil Servants because, quite frankly, it is a matter of basic fairness and moral leadership. Let us remember that civil servants are the backbone of our government. They are the ones keeping departments running, answering public needs, drafting vital policies and delivering essential services to keep the country moving. Yet when it comes to financial recognition, especially in the cost-of-living crisis that we are in they are often left with crumbs while MPs enjoy the lion's share. We are told that MPs do not set their own

pay but let's not forget the body that does is itself a product of a system that remains detached from the lived experience of ordinary public sector workers. MPs gleefully accept these higher increases with self-virtuous justification on why they are so deserved while voting through minimal awards for the Civil Service. Their message is clear: one rule for them and another for the workers.

We are in the middle of a national crisis, where food, fuel and housing costs are rising faster than wages, civil servants, some of whom are now relying on food banks are expected to do more with less every year. Meanwhile MPs already on salaries more than double that of an average civil servant, have also the privilege of generous expenses, subsidised meals and often second incomes. If public service is truly about serving then those at the top should lead by example not exception. Equal cost of living pay awards would not just be fair, it sends a powerful message that we are in it together and goes beyond some nice words in a speech. It will show up in policy and in pay. I urge you to support this motion for a commitment to justice, dignity and respect for all who serve this country and not a privilege for the few. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Charlotte. Mover of 191?

## **EQUAL PAY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **MOTION 191**

#### **191. EQUAL PAY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

This Congress

Congress welcomes the equal pay settlement in Birmingham, a settlement that wasn't freely given but came with a fight. We congratulate all those workers who stood together to deliver this historic win.

Across the country GMB women are organising, mobilising and campaigning to win Equal Pay. In Sunderland this began by GMB identifying that the Council had used an arm's length body wholly owned by the council 'Sunderland care and support' to undermine the working conditions of already low paid carers, this resulted in an equal pay, equal value campaign which has now widened out to the entire local authority.

Whilst winning for these workers is paramount, we must also place it within the context of existing public spending levels.

It is well known that Local Government has suffered for years due to austerity. Many Councils are already having to declare section 114's. If the current trend continues, there will be a further devastating impact upon front line services and our society. Additionally with the current funding climate being so stark, Local Authority leaders are less likely to proactively deal with equal pay liabilities, most resort to burying their heads in the sand until forced to acknowledge the failure by a tribunal.

With more equal pay battles on the horizon, it's time for the Government to acknowledge both the issue of equal pay and wider LA spending struggles, commit to making it right and put the necessary funding in place. A commitment GMB fought for in 'A new deal for working people', a commitment that this government has shied away from, and now we must hold them to account to their prior commitment's or revoke our funding. GMB are the only union actively campaigning across the country, our four-step strategy to address equal pay must include;

- To recommit to the battle for equal pay in Local Government.
- To campaign for a fair Local Government Funding settlement, linked to a duty on Local Authorities to assess their own potential equal pay liabilities.
- To work with GMB Councillors to lobby the Government for a fair funding settlement.
- A joint national campaign pulling together all exiting Equal Pay campaign's for in unity there is strength & together we are strong.

## **W22 SUNDERLAND COUNCIL BRANCH**

### **NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION**

*(Carried)*

KIMBERLEY INGLIS (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I am standing here today to propose Motion 191, a motion that is about mine and thousands of other women's day-to-day experiences. I work in domiciliary care, spending days caring for the most vulnerable residents of the North East. And of course you will not be surprised hear that we are mainly a female workforce. I have been in the union for years and what really got me passionate and involved was when I realised that my local authority had done the dirty on me and my fellow workforce, putting our services into an arms-length organisation, paying us less than men in equivalent roles and removing us from the local government pension scheme.

Thanks to personal intervention from Gary with support from the team at North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, we launched a campaign of equal pay. Since then we have built a great network of activists and equal pay champions, grown the union and recruited hundreds of members. I can honestly say that this has changed my life and when we win it will change the lives of thousands in Sunderland.

Congress, we all know the state of local government finances but will not let low-paid woman pay the cost of years of Government austerity. On this issue perhaps more than any other we call upon all those Labour MPs and councillors we have supported through money and resources to step up to the plate, stand by the values of Barbara Castle and demand that there is a fair settlement. We see this fight as a national one, a fight that

we have given dozens of local authority across the country. In Sunderland we take ideas and inspiration from our sisters in Birmingham and offer our solidarity to those still fighting for pay justice.

Congress, I know that sometimes equal pay conversations can be difficult. I know in some of the movements even within the union would rather that we did not always shine the light too closely, but our movement, the movement to better the lives of working people is nothing if it does not raise us all up.

So, Congress, please support this motion and let's win equal pay in every council across the region. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Kimberley. Secunder?

DAVID RIDDLE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, Congress, Vice-President, seconding Motion 1911, Equal Pay in Local Government. Today I am speaking with two hats on. The first hat is that of a branch secretary in Sunderland Council where I am proud of the work that Kim and her fellow activists are carrying out as they lay the campaign for pay justice. I am also wearing a hat as member of our regional committee supporting cross-regional campaigns. In North East, Yorkshire & Humber we are investing seriously in equal pay. We have live campaigns running in Sunderland, Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham, Durham, Leeds, Bradford, and more are just around the corner more. So far over 5,000 women have lodged claims and I know that is going to grow massively in the coming months. Those campaigns are worth millions of pounds, and are going to deliver thousands of pounds into the pockets of

low-paid women and will transform so many lives. The fight for quality pay is all of ours, wherever we are, whatever background or gender. So, Congress please support the fight for equal pay. Support this motion. I second it. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, David. Anyone wish to speak against any of the motions? Can I call on Francis Dwum to give the qualification for the CEC and ask the mover and seconder of Motion 184 to come to the rostrum, please.

FRANCIS DWUM (CEC): Good morning, President, good morning, Congress, responding to Motion 189 which we are supporting with a qualification. The spirit of the motion is correct, but there is no instruction to GMB. In line with the CEC Statement on Pay and the Cost of Living for 2021, Congress agreed that Congress does not seek to bind the hands of our negotiators by dictating the detail of negotiation. At the same time, Congress as the supreme policy making body of the union does establish the important principles that reps and officers should have with regard to negotiations. It is important to note that MPs' pay has been tacked to average pay increases since 2015 as indexed by the Office for National Statistics. GMB policy recognises that the best measure of change to the cost of living is through the RPI (Retail Price Index) rate of inflation. We would not wish for Congress to pre-determine what Civil Service workers aspire to in their pay claims. Congress, please support this motion with that qualification. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Francis. Does Southern agree the qualification on 189? *(Agreed)* All those in favour of 179, please show. Any against? That is carried. All

those in favour of 189, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 191, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 179 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 189 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 191 was **CARRIED**.*

## **EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANDATORY AND WORK-RELATED TRAINING**

### **MOTION 184**

#### **184. EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANDATORY AND WORK-RELATED TRAINING**

This Congress believes;

1. The Employment Law introduced on April 6, 2020, regarding mandatory training imposes an unjust burden on employees by allowing unpaid or non-work-time training in certain circumstances.
2. Mandatory and work-related training is integral to an employee's ability to perform their role effectively and should be seen as a core employer responsibility.
3. Expecting employees to undertake training without pay or outside working hours undermines fairness, contributes to exploitation, and disregards the value of workers' time and contribution.

This Congress resolves to;

- (a) Campaign for the rescission of the Employment Law of April 6, 2020, regarding mandatory training.
- (b) Advocate for the introduction of a new law mandating that: All mandatory and work-related training must be fully paid by the employer. Employees must complete such training during their contracted working hours.

(c) Work with other trade unions, parliamentary representatives, and advocacy groups to lobby for this legislative change.

(d) Raise awareness among GMB members of their rights and the importance of fair training practices, highlighting the union's efforts to ensure equitable treatment in the workplace.

## **L27 LEICESTER HEALTH CARE BRANCH**

### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Could the mover of 184 please come to the front?

CAROL MORRELL (Midlands): Moving Motion 184. President, Congress, whether you get paid for time spent on mandatory training can depend on your contract. If you are an employee or worker and started work after 6th April 2020, then any mandatory training must be written in your contract. Some employers expect you to complete this in your own time. I am going to ask you a question now and I would like a response please. Do you think that is fair? *(Cries of "No!")* Let's be a bit louder. Do we think that's fair? *(Cries of "No!")* No, we don't. So, we ask this Congress to campaign to remove or change this law and to advocate a new law that all mandatory and work-related training be fully paid by the employer and workers should complete such training during their normal working hours. We ask that we work with other trade unions and parliamentary representatives to raise awareness for GMB members of their rights.

How many of you out there have children or grandchildren and they won't mow the lawn or do their pots unless they have a tenner in their hand? Yes, we are laughing

because we know! So why should an employer that needs this mandatory training, and it is called mandatory for a reason, expect it to be completed for free. There are laws against modern-day slavery and isn't being forced to work for nothing exactly that? *(Cries of "Yes!")* Yes, it is. It is exploitation of workers and needs to be addressed as soon as possible. By the way before I finish, the kids are right, aren't they, they are not daft. A tenner to wash a few pots. I wish my pay rate was as good as that! I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Karen. Secunder?

NICOLA HOWELL (Midlands): I am standing here to second Motion 184 that we just heard about employees having to undertake mandatory training in their own time. I work in an authority that employs drivers and escorts to transport SEN children to and from school these staff have it written into their contract that all training is to be carried out during the school holidays. However, they are on term-time only contracts. Some of them have their pay annualised spread across the year and others are paid only during the term. It all equates to minimum wage. The escorts are often mothers with school aged children themselves, juggling so that they can be at home together during the school holidays. Making them come into work for training during the break means that they have to source and pay for additional childcare. Many of the escorts are non-drivers and have arrangements with the driver to collect them on their way to work, so when they are called in for training outside of work hours, they will have to pay for additional public transport costs.

I therefore ask Congress to support this motion to campaign against 6th April 2020 rule in the employment law and remove the unjust burden on employees to attend training outside of work hours. I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Nicola. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition of the motion? The CEC are supporting this motion. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 184 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Colleagues, we have an incredibly special guest speaker for you today. Aneira Thomas has the long journey from Swansea to address you all. Aneira was the first baby born under the NHS. (*Applause*) Yes, that deserves a round of applause!

Congress, we all have a connection to the NHS but perhaps no one more than Aneira - having dedicated her life in service as a mental health nurse, alongside her four sisters who also became nurses. Aneira continues to be an active supporter of our NHS speaking out on a range of issues and at public rallies. We are so pleased she has joined us and that she has been able to hear you all speak so passionately about how important our NHS is to preserve and rebuild. Thank you, Aneira.

ANEIRA THOMAS: Fasten your seatbelts, you're in for a bumpy ride. Another day in paradise with you, Congress. It is a privilege. The last time I was in sunny Brighton I was staying at the same hotel as the actors on TOWIE, "The Only way is Essex". I

was being filmed on the beach and they were being filmed on the beach and I somehow got involved in their filming. They were all in their robes and somebody said, “Get your kit off!” And I said, “Sorry, too many miles on the clock.” (*Laughter*)

I really am privileged to be asked to address you today, I really, truly am. You who make the difference are the public sector service workers; there when it matters. We are at the mercy of the UK Governments of the day and when you are in power you give it to the people, by listening and acting upon it. I am carefully optimistic now as we have a Labour Government in England, and in Wales, as I have always thought of Wales as being the poor relation: make do and mend, we do the best with what we are given. It is all about equality, morality, fairness, support and protection, as circumstances change in seconds, bringing unseen challenges. And having somebody walking beside you in unexpected times is vital and reassuring, lightening the load for us; responding and reacting when in need. Happy employees are more productive. Our amazing NHS care givers, front line, first on scene, the teachers, retail staff that fed the public through Covid, and so many behind-the-scene workers that ensure the smooth running of our vital services. A team effort that really does get noticed by your empowerment, diligence and constant hard work. I salute you all.

And the amazing man and activist, the late Harry Leslie Smith’s words: “We aren’t all born in Downton Abbey.” I never ever want to see rallies like we did with the last Government, in London and all over the country, marching the streets for fair pay. It really made me cry. And on the other hand, great admiration for the fighting spirit, fighting back. Such solidarity. One big family.

What the great Nye Bevan's plan alluded to at the inception of our jewel in the crown National Health Service was that all health workers' salaries would rise in line with inflation, as they had been exploited for far too long.

I really am privileged to be named by doctor that delivered me after the founder Nye. I am just as proud to be a miner's daughter. Early one morning in May 1926 a band of brothers were preparing a long march from Cross Hands in Carmarthenshire, a little village not too far from the Black Mountains, destination London, where the streets were paved with gold. The General Strike had hit the country, contributing to severe poverty for a generation of workers and their families. "Not a penny of the pay, not a minute on the day." Lean and hungry times for so many. Where my father Willie worked was known as the Great Mountain Colliery, also known as Young Man's Grave, for obvious reasons, but the camaraderie was one of mutual respect for one another; a sense of solidarity. But best foot forward. London was the place to find employment. Cometh the hour, cometh the man.

Unbeknown to Willie, little Edna May was leaving another corner of South Wales, Glamorganshire and London was her destination, too. The eldest of seven children, her parents were suffering shocking poverty and misery. They sent their oldest child to find work wherever she could. And they both found employment at Parklands Hospital in Basingstoke and then went back to London. Two worlds collided, they fell in love, grabbed two strangers as witnesses off the high street and under special licence got married and the two strangers, mam and dad, went back to their pokey little flat and had a wedding breakfast of bacon, egg and black pudding. They set up home in north London in Willesden Green. When war broke out, I think they stayed there for about

15 years, they came back to Wales, and dad went back to the colliery he had left in 1926.

That was then and this is now. Seven children later we were brought up on a smallholding in a little village called Cefneithen. There was a toilet at the bottom of the garden and my older sister's job was to cut newspapers to hang on the hook in the toilet, and my father used to say to them, "If you come across Hitler's face, leave that one for me." (*Applause*).

We were five girls and two boys I followed my older sisters into nursing, mental health nursing. My aunts, matrons and when they said, "Jump!", you'd say, "How high? "And there weren't many opportunities for me as my parents could not afford university fees back then but, in hindsight, I did pass unconditionally to a very good grammar school in Carmarthenshire. I didn't even know what "unconditionally" meant. My favourite subjects were art (I was creative) and technical drawing - and boys! My art teacher wrote on my school report the words, "Aneira is a dreamer." And I am so glad I have been a dreamer. It has put me in good stead for the life I was to lead, all of my years. I had a very different and chaotic life, different to my siblings. When the going got tough, it was tough. And when one of my sisters, Marys, introduces me she always says, "This is Nye. Her life is complicated", and when go away together, and we have been away a lot together, we come back, and she always says, "I don't want to see you for three months at least".

When I look in the magic mirror I see that young girl looking back at me. The young girl that was stopping the traffic on her way to work, wearing high-heeled platform

shoes and leather or suede hot pants. In between my nursing training, I worked at a petrol pump station. I was a petrol pump attendant for extra money; the boss said the takings were the highest they had ever had. (*Laughter*) Because the customers used to ask me to check their tyres and look under the bonnet to check the oil. And I was just a girl who couldn't say no!

My mother Edna May always used to say, "Look how rich I am, living to the age of 96, I have seen my seven children grow up, my 21 grandchildren and 65 great and great great grandchildren." (*Applause*) That's the meaning of rich. In comparison to her own mother, who died at the age of 40 leaving seven children, and died without pain relief because of lack of affordability. I never knew my grandparents. They had died between the ages of 30 and 50, because it was only the privileged few who could afford healthcare.

I always say mam left a legacy and her sayings to her girls were, "Be good sweet girl and let who will be clever. And "Always read newspapers as you must know what's going on in the world." The last one she used to say to the girls was, "Keep your hand on your ha'penny", and I was the one who didn't. I was the naughty one. (*Laughter*) And she would often say to me, "Darlin', I don't know where you came from but we do love you." (*Laughter*)

My perception of riches is the same as my mother's. In the last few years there were rock-bottom times and I had to dig deep to try to find answers, when both my son and daughter suffered subarachnoid brain haemorrhages, spending long periods in the trauma wards at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. My girl Lindsey was in a

coma for quite a while. The care and compassion they received in both ITU and high dependency units were second to none. From the very top skilled neurosurgeons, nursing staff, the skill of the care givers and the fantastic tea ladies, cleaning staff that cared for us a family too. We owe them a large debt.

On one Saturday night a visitor ran over to me excited, I was parking my car (because you get friendly with the visitors because they are also going through trauma) and this lady shouted, "Have you seen Lindsey today? Lindsey's awake. Lindsey's awake". And my stomach done somersaults, but I was scared. So, I went up to her room and she was looking back at me. A long way to go but I saw those beautiful green eyes again. And when she could eventually speak, a doctor would do the routine checks and ask her the same questions day-by-day for quite a while, "Do you know where you are?" Next one, "Do you know your name? Do you know what day it is?" And she said, "Yes, it's my birthday, I'm 40." (*Applause*) And the last one of all, the same question: "Do you know who the Prime Minister is? And bearing in mind this was ten years ago, her reply was, and I am going to swear now, "Yes I do, it's the arsehole who froze my pay five years ago"! (*Applause*).

Lindsey has three children and her middle son Joe was a barman in the local boating club and the whole of the village was fantastic when my children were in, and they used to ask him on his shifts behind the bar when she was, as Lindsey says, "I was only sleeping, mammy, "Has mammy work up? Is mammy better?" And the same answer he'd give, "No, mammy's still being seduced" - instead of sedated. How lovely at 17 he didn't know what it meant.

Her own colleague paramedics were truly amazing during this time as well. They never left her side or ours as a family, they carried us, and not forgetting the big boss upstairs. He is always testing us. I have never passed the test! This afternoon while I am here my Lindsey is probably sleeping after her third night shift. She is back at work as a paramedic a year down the line. (*Applause*) She has nearly 25-year service - long service.

Ordinary people doing extraordinary things 24/7. They catch us when we fall. And I would also like to see music in some hospital settings. That is important. Without a doubt, we do stand on the shoulders of giants and must learn from history and our forefathers and maybe sometimes look back to basics. Our love for our phenomenal National Health Service knows no bounds. Love will move mountains. Love will conquer all and love will find a way, and so will we. Nye Bevan left us a legacy for future generations and we will continue to protect, maintain and cherish it by respecting why it was set up in the first place in 1948.

And a quote by DH Lawrence, the author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, "Do not allow to slip away from you the people that came before you, won with such hard knocks." It is not a bottomless pit. It is complex beyond my comprehension. It does need restructuring and certain reforms to deliver the best by the best. My opinion is that the four nations of our wonderful Great Britain should share data and listen further to the real experts, you and the front-liners. They know what is going on. They need to be around the table and collectively bring vital information and ideas to the table. They know their craft. Forward thinking for an efficient and sustainable health service and face to face is important. If the wealthy can afford to pay for care, private companies

can play a part. It is great in theory as long as it doesn't affect our public National Health Service. Planning, preparation, listening and change is good. There is always room for improvement in every field of work and skills. Also improving lives. It was revolutionary. But not forgetting that laughter is the best medicine.

"This is Nye, my National Health baby." These words will always be with me. As child that is how mam used to introduce me, never understanding the significance in my child's mind and not knowing what a turning point in history it was. We lead the way. It has played such a central part in my life. I am honoured to have been involved with so many inspiring people over the years who are as committed and compassionate as I am, but having a wonderful comprehensive health service, a network of dedicated people that strive for excellence in patient care and treatment. I am often asked if I could one word to describe what it means to me having a National Health Service and the word I think of is "safe".

I would like to shine a light on the NHS Charities Together. They provide practical and emotional support to the incredible care givers and communities who suffer physical and mental health problems at varying times in their lives. The cost of living now has such an impact on so many working families across the board. And a shout out to the amazing volunteers giving up their precious time for a number of vital services too. Thank you. (*Applause*)

I am honoured to have met and been invited to the many events owing to the celebrations and anniversary milestones over the years of the National Health Service. My last one was attending and giving out awards to the unsung heroes of the NHS in

Manchester. These people are key contributors towards achievements and common objectives in the workplace, as you do too, safeguarding when matters arise, where they need back-up and a voice. The Imperial War Museum requested my birth certificate a couple of years ago to display for posterity. I am so humbled to share a little place in history with a brave band of men and women, defenders of the British Isles during conflict in wars. And a Turner Prize winner, Jeremy Deller, was commissioned to paint a portrait of me for the 70th anniversary. They raised quite a lot of money and the money went towards the children's wards at Great Ormond Street Hospital. I also launched a train for GWR celebrating another milestone of the NHS.

I was also one of the judges for the "Great British Menu", which amused all my family because nobody will eat in my house because I really and truly can't cook! My daughter reckons she was brought up on Kit-Kats and toast!

The banquet at St Bart's Teaching Hospital in London where I was asked to read a poem written by Michael Rosen. The name of the poem was "These Are The Hands", which was very poignant, especially after his long illness contracting Covid and his life being saved. Many, many more events of great importance. Pride of Britain and having my book published in 2020 was an achievement.

I had to name my book "Hold On Edna!" as my mam wanted to push me out at one minute before midnight, and the birth of the National Health Service was imminent. She was waiting for the doctor to tell her to push and she could not understand why he kept looking at the clock and looking back at mam, "Hold on Edna, hold on!" And I arrived at one minute past midnight. But my brother reckoned I was pushed back in for

one minute! (*Applause*) And the late Rhodri Morgan, our First Minister at the time, said in a speech he thinks the naughty nurses turned on the clock one minute to make sure it was a Welsh baby born. (*Cheers*)

I asked my mother so many questions because I never had grandparents, but one question I never asked her is what she would have named me. I would like to have been Gabriella.

Anyway, my book has been very popular due the digital world we are living in now. There were a lot of worried men in the village when it came out! (*Laughter and applause*) I did find a place in mid Wales in the mountains if I had to move as well. I am known as “the Poster Girl of the NHS” back home. I have had lots of offers of marriage, as you have to kiss a lot of frogs before find your prince. The last offer I had he introduced himself as a Wing Commander Weetabix-Smyth. I had done a bit delving and I found out he had been a traffic warden for the last 30 years and never flew a plane!

And I am so proud to have had so many letters off people naming their baby girls Aneira, named after me. What an honour. Stars of stage screen that shout it from the rooftops as well. I have also met members of Nye Bevan’s family in the birthplace of Tredegar in Cardiff. That means a lot to me.

I have been busy writing another book with my fellow NHS history friend Emma Snow. Here great grandfather John Tomley was instrumental in trying to set up an NHS, decades before Nye Bevan in 1948. Emma has also written a book called “The First NHS”, and Assembly Member Julie Morgan has said that our books should be on the

school curriculum in every Welsh and English secondary schools. GWR have funded us both to write the first ever children's book about Nye Bevan and NHS history and to send them for free to some primary schools. The story also mentions the relevance of unions. What a way for young people to learn about trade unions at an early age. Perhaps GMB might help us get our books across to schools in the UK in any way possible. Just saying, Gavin! The beautiful children are our future. Our exceptional teachers encourage and engage their pupils to be confident by guiding and shaping their lives to achieve the best they can be. Truly inspirational. Education, education, education.

Most workers spend as much time in the workplace as they do with their families and no one should feel burnt-out, underpaid, unhappy or aggrieved in the workplace. Your role has a significant, substantial and impactful effect on your members on work-related and various matters. I am in the midst of a powerhouse I do realise that, and the pleasure is all mine, but solidarity with Gaza and Ukraine (*Applause*) is uppermost in our minds. And to relay the words of the late Pope Francis, "Look after Mother Earth".

One more thing I would like to read out, this is wonderful. "Congress, I am pleased to hear that you have voted yesterday to make 15th November Aneurin Bevan Day to celebrate the founder of our NHS - my name sake." That is wonderful. Thank you for having me. The pleasure is all mine. There is always a welcome in the hillside for you, in the land of my fathers. Diolch yn fawr. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Aneira, for that entertaining speech. (*Applause*) No one else is allowed to swear in their speech! She gave us a very small glimpse into her

life. If you want to know more, as she said, she has written a book called “Hold On Edna!” It will be available tomorrow on Bookmarks, but if you go today to that stall, you can reserve a copy, and Aneira will be signing a few, so make your way there today.

That ends this morning’s session, I am sorry it has run over a bit, but be back at 2 o’clock and enjoy the fringes. Thank you.

*Adjourned for Lunch*

## **MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

*Conference reassembled at 2 pm*

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, can you take your seats please because I call Congress to order. I will start by calling on Karen Dudley to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 3 please.

### **Standing Orders Committee Report No. 3**

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress moving SOC Report No. 3.

Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been informed that the following motions have been withdrawn: from Wales & South West Region Motion 235 - Protection and

Development of Nuclear Energy in the UK. And from London Region, Motion 66 - Equitable Anti Racist Workplaces.

Emergency motions. The SOC has accepted a further emergency motion as being in order to debate. This Emergency Motion No 59 - Protect Trans and Non-Binary Members' Rights in the Workplace, from GMB Scotland. The day and time when the emergency motion will be heard will be announced as soon as possible.

### **Bucket Collection**

The amount collected by Southern Region for the Macmillan Cancer Charity was £490.36, plus one US cent. And 10, I hope I have pronounced this right zloty and 2.2 euros.

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

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition of Report No. 3? In that case I will put that at vote. All those in favour please show. Any against?

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

THE PRESIDENT: Just as usual, regions will be sent the details of all the bucket collections. and thereafter their regional committees can make a decision as to how much they want to donate as well.

Before we start this afternoon's business I would like to show the regional videos from Wales & South West, GMB Scotland and Southern Region. Thank you.

*(Wales & South West Region video shown)*

*(GMB Scotland video shown)*

*(GMB Southern Region video shown)*

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Brilliant videos, very inspiring and up lifting and demonstrating that we are a campaigning and winning union. Thank you to those regions and GMB Scotland.

### **Eleanor Marx Award**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it gives me enormous pleasure to present this year's Eleanor Marx Award and to introduce you to this year joint winners, Louren Evans and Carly Harries. You just saw them on that video. We have another video of them so we will play that as well before we ask them to come up on stage. *(Video shown)*  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: A powerful video. Their efforts led, as it said in the video, to the saving from closure Ferndale House - a care home for the elderly and those suffering from dementia, in South Wales - from closure. It was a victory that was a product of their grass-roots activism amongst their fellow workers and the wider community,

complete with rallies, marches, mass petitioning and protests, together with a cutting-edge social media campaign that tapped new areas of support.

This combination of modern technology and approaches with core trade union values, is particularly fitting when we recall the contribution of Eleanor Marx during the early years of GMB's story, who blazed a bright path for women in our union, through her visionary internationalism, socialist solidarity and activism.

Louren and Carly, I welcome you to the platform! *(A standing ovation)*

LOUREN EVANS: Wow! Hello, I'm Louren.

CARLY HARRIES: And I am Carly.

LOUREN EVANS: We did not expect this at all. We would just like to say thank you for the award, thank you for capturing our story and the journey that we were on, especially with our residents, who mean the world to us as you can see. The fight was to save their home and we can honestly say we are so proud of ourselves that we actually done that, so thank you very much.

CARLY HARRIES: Like Louren said, it is an honour to receive this and have this recognition, for just two girls living in Ferndale, for everything we have done. Also our families are with us today. They have been with us through everything so to our partners and our children we would just like it say thank you as well. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done again.

### **Industrial & Economic Policy: Private Section**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress we move on to our first group of motions this afternoon so could the speakers of motions 154, 155, 156, 157 and 158 please come down to the front, please, and be ready to speak and the mover of 154 as soon as they are ready come up to the rostrum.

### **RIGHT TO FAIR PROCESS AND LEGAL RECOURSE FOR CLIENT SITE REMOVAL REQUESTS**

#### **MOTION 154**

#### **154. RIGHT TO FAIR PROCESS AND LEGAL RECOURSE FOR CLIENT SITE REMOVAL REQUESTS**

This Congress believes that members who work for contractors supplying services to clients often find themselves subject to requests to their employer by the client organisation to remove them from site and not send them again. This is known as a Site Removal Request and there is no legal requirement for any process to take place before the member loses their work placement. They then find themselves facing a process with their employer to look at alternative placements, and if none that are suitable exist at that time, find themselves being dismissed for 'Some Other Substantial Reason.'

It is our motion that GMB should campaign and lobby the government for the right to a fair process following a site removal request, before any action is taken to remove them from their role, and if they are dismissed for SOSR by their employer as a result, and the process which

led to their removal was either flawed or erred in its decision, then they should be liable for losses arising from the unfair dismissal in the same way as an ordinary unfair dismissal claim.

### **X53 MIDLAND SPECIALIST BRANCH**

#### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

NATHAN KEIGHTLEY (Midlands): President, Congress, afternoon, everyone. Proud member of the Midlands Region over there. *(Applause)* Moving Motion 154, Right to Fair Process For Site Access Removal. Many years ago, before I knew about any of my rights, before I knew anything about the fight that you can have against employers, I used to work for a security company at a hospital in Northamptonshire doing security. The facilities manager at the time knew that I was a third-party employee. He told me a couple of bits like, “Would you come and work for me”, and whatever else to try to get rid of the security company. I dwelled on it for a while in my head and I had to say to my gaffer at the time this has happened. Obviously, it got fed back and I was kicked off site basically sacked, so I went from a 60-hour working in security job to a, “I’m ever so sorry, we’ve only four hours on the door on a Friday night.” Like I say, I knew nothing about any rights that I had and whatever else.

Everyone should have a right to representation and the chance of a fair process in work, no matter who what where and when. It is really important. It is important for good people like ourselves to make sure that that is kept up. There is a large group of workers that do not have some of the privileges that people that are employed directly have, unfortunately, so, we are calling on the GMB to help put this unfair process, kangaroo-

style court operation to bed. Let's get rid of this. Let's chuck it on the scrapheap where it belongs. Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nathan, thank you. Secunder?

KAREN MORRELL (Midlands): Seconding the Right to Fair Process For Site Removal Requests. President, Congress, workplace organisers know the struggles of fighting for our members to have a fair hearing and when it comes to misconduct processes this is even more so when the employer is influenced by a client. Why is it reasonable that a client can remove an employee from their workplace with no justification whatsoever? We believe at GMB that this is wrong. We call on GMB to fight, campaign and lobby government to ensure that a fair process is followed before an employee can be subject to site removal, which may lead to dismissal via some other substantial reason. I only found out yesterday that this could actually happen. I did not know that you could lose your jobs just because you were not accepted on a site, and I am really disgusted by this. I hope you will support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

## **PROTECTING UK PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY**

### **MOTION 155**

#### **155. PROTECTING UK PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY**

This Congress recognises the importance of the UK pharmaceutical industry in ensuring both safety and security of essential medication in the UK. The GMB has a significant membership in the industry of highly skilled workers, providing quality products within the UK. Medication supply and availability since Brexit has become unreliable, with shortages of vast numbers of medications including those for epilepsy, angina, diabetes, anaphylactic shock, mental health,

HRT and obesity to name a few. When meeting with manufacturers, we are told about cost inefficiency to produce in the UK and threats to close UK manufacturing for cheaper production and reduced red tape in Europe and India. We call upon Congress and the GMB to lobby government to ensure continued UK manufacturing and medication supply security in the UK. So, medication is available for those who need it and not just those who can afford to buy it privately.

## **EXETER & NORTH DEVON E35 BRANCH**

## **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Mover of Motion 155?

ROB KENWOOD (Wales & South West): Hello, President, Congress. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* So, as you can imagine, I am pretty nervous. I do apologise.

Colleagues, I am here to move Motion 155, but let's be clear from the outset, the right to medicine is not a luxury. It is a fundamental necessity, a matter of life and death and it must not be left to the mercy of markets, profit margins or foreign supply chains. This Congress recognises the vital importance of the UK pharmaceutical industry, not as a strategic sector but as a lifeline, one that protects our families, our communities and our NHS, and it is one built on the expertise of our members: skilled, dedicated GMB workers whose commitment to quality, safety and care keeps this country going.

Since Brexit we have seen something deeply worrying - a growing crisis in medication supplies, shortage of essential drugs for epilepsy, diabetes, mental health, HRT and even life-saving treatments for anaphylactic shock. People are being forced to go from pharmacy to pharmacy crossing counties or turning to private prescriptions, if they can afford it. This is not the Britain we were promised and it is not the Britain for working people. We meet with manufacturers who tell us the same thing: that they are being priced out of production in the UK, squeezed by red tape but still tempted abroad by lower costs and weaker regulations in Europe and India. Let's be honest, Congress, this is not a threat to jobs, it is a threat to national health security. Outsourcing our pharmaceutical production means outsourcing our resilience. It leaves us vulnerable to future pandemics, global conflicts and economic shocks. It means handing over our health to the global markets. We cannot allow that. This is why the GMB must lead the call to bring production home and invest in our UK pharmaceutical industry and protect the workers who make it all possible.

Congress, we call on the GMB to lobby the Government and any future one with a simple firm message: keep our manufacturing in Britain, secure our medication supply chains and invest in our workforce, and guarantee that every patient in this country rich or poor can have access to medication when they need it. Let's remember our NHS was founded on the principle that healthcare is a right and let's not allow medication and access to become a privilege. Unions have always stood up for the industries that matter and this industry, the pharmaceutical sector, is not only a pillar of our communities but also a pillar of our nation's health. So let's fight for it, let's protect it and let's invest in it. Support this motion, stand with our motion and secure a healthier future for all. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Rob. Secunder?

IAN MINARDS (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 155, Protecting UK Pharmaceutical Production and Supply. First-time delegate, second-time speaker (*Applause*). Congress, as we have heard, the UK's pharmaceutical sector is not only a driver of economic growth but a lifeline for millions of patients. Our members in this industry are the unsung heroes who ensure that life-saving medicines reach our hospitals, our GP surgeries and our homes. Let's face the facts, periodic and persistent medicine shortages have become the new normal in the UK. Just ask any pharmacist or GP. Shortages of critical drugs such as EpiPens, HRT patches and treatments for chronic conditions are causing frustrations for professionals and anxiety for patients. The Government has taken some steps but the problem is still highly prevalent and deeply concerning.

Why is this happening? Because our manufacturing base is being hollowed out. We are seeing a dramatic fall in investment in capacity and now companies are warning that more production may move abroad unless urgent action is taken. The cost of conducting business here is rising and regulatory delays are making it harder for companies to adapt and respond to new challenges. This is not just an industry issue; it is a public health emergency in the making. If we lose our domestic production we lose control over our medicines supply. We become vulnerable to global shocks, trade disputes and supply chain failures, and it will be ordinary people who pay the price. This is why this motion is so important.

Colleagues, let's send a clear message that GMB stands with our members, with patients and with our NHS. Let's protect UK pharmaceutical production and supply. I urge you all to support. *(Applause)*

## **SUPPORTING SCOTCH WHISKY**

### **MOTION 156**

#### **156. SUPPORTING SCOTCH WHISKY**

This Congress recognises the thousands of well-paid and skilled jobs across Scotland in brewing, whisky and spirits (BWS) and the millions it brings to the UK Treasury through its high quality and iconic produce; but recognises BWS is being bombarded from all sides, including rising prices, undermining one of Scotland's key economic success stories.

Congress condemns the Tories' inequitable 2023 tax hike of 10.1% on spirits which reduced Treasury tax income, and the further hammer blow via the Labour UK Government's RPI increase in the 2024 Budget; and notes that using the sector as a piggy bank by increasing prices will damage jobs and pay growth and is disproportionately punitive against the lowest earners who enjoy alcohol responsibly.

Congress believes steps must be taken to alleviate pressures to not just maintain, but grow Scottish jobs in BWS; believes that a return of tariffs on Scotch whisky and American bourbon would be damaging to industry and jobs here and in the USA; notes that single malt Scotch whiskies must be produced and bottled in Scotland and that including blended whisky under this Geographical Indicator would further raise quality and create jobs in Scotland.

Congress calls on the UK Government to:

- Reverse its and the Tories' tax increases on spirits at the next available opportunity.
- Seek to keep tariff free trade of Scotch whisky around the world.

- Include blended whisky under the Geographical Indicator for Scotch whisky so they too must be bottled in Scotland.

## **CLYDE BONDING BRANCH**

### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Ian, well done. Mover of Motion 156, please?

RODDY McKENZIE (GMB Scotland): Moving Motion 156 on the Scottish Whisky Industry. Today I want to talk to you about our iconic Scottish Scotch whisky industry. Whisky is more than just a drink. It is a bedrock of Scottish identity, a global success story and a vital source of jobs and wages for thousands of GMB members. Make no mistake, this industry and the livelihoods it supports is under attack from multiple angles. Scottish members know the drill. We wrote to the UK Government recently urging them to keep tariff-free trade for Scotch whisky around the world. We have seen this before, haven't we? Years ago, damaging US tariffs slashed sales and hit public finances hard. We cannot allow this to happen again. The US market alone is worth nearly £1 billion to us yet with a 10% tariff still in place trade is being restricted.

Diageo, makers of Johnnie Walker are set to lose a staggering £113 million this year. This is not just a number on a balance sheet - that is jobs, that is stability and that is families feeling the pinch. We already have seen redundancies in companies like Clyde Bonding. We cannot be dragged into a trade war that suffocates our sales. Where tariffs are implemented, we absolutely must not accept them. We demand that all appropriate steps are taken to protect our industry while aggressively seeking new

opportunities for truly tariff-free trade globally. The industry has already been seriously affected with minimum unit pricing, a 10% Tory hike on spirits in 2023, a struggling hospitality sector and potential advertising restrictions looming. Our industry is facing a perfect storm. Every single week we tell politicians Scotch whisky is a product to be proud of. It is time we valued it, not demonised it and stop treating it like a cash cow. Only then will jobs and wages truly grow.

Now let's talk about bottling. This is a problem that strikes at the heart of our principles. Many of our iconic whisky businesses are now owned by foreign companies. Take Ballantine's, for example. It is distilled in Glasgow but where is it bottled for the French market? In France! This work, these jobs used to be done in Scotland. Moving the bottling abroad has cost Scottish jobs. It is a disgrace. The GMB's message is clear and unwavering. All this work belongs where the whisky is distilled. It belongs in Scotland. We must fight to bring these jobs home. Please support this motion.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Seconder?

MICHAEL DAVIDSON (GMB Scotland): Good afternoon, Congress, President. Michael Davidson, Scotland Region, first-time delegate and first-time speaker.  
*(Applause)* I am proud to be up here seconding Motion 156.

Congress, Scottish whisky is more than just a world-renowned spirit. It is the lifeblood of Highland and Islands' economies. From the Highlands to the islands, over 140 distilleries bring jobs, pride and global recognition to small towns and villages. Scotch

whisky generates billions of pounds in exports, making it one of the UK's top food and drink exports. It is a true economic success story for our times, and one that our members can be proud to have created through their hard work. But its value is not just economic, it is cultural, it is about preserving heritage, landscapes and a way of life for workers and their families that cannot be replicated anywhere else. The Tory 2023 tax hike of 10.1% had a debilitating effect on whisky distilling. Highland and island communities cannot just be a piggy bank for the Exchequer through tax or tariffs. The Scottish Government as usual talks big but has not delivered for whisky. We hear about Brand Scotland but we do not see the support for the community which builds that brand.

Congress, our movement knows better than anyone else what happens to communities when their industries decline or disappear - poverty and alienation. We cannot allow that to happen to Scotch whisky. Our brewing and distillery members are proud of their work. Let's give them the tools to succeed. I urge Congress to support this motion. Slange Var! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Michael. The mover of Motion 157?

## **FOR A STRONGER FORCE IN BREWING, WHISKY AND SPIRITS**

### **MOTION 157**

#### **157. FOR A STRONGER FORCE IN BREWING, WHISKY, AND SPIRITS**

This Congress recognises across the Brewing, Whisky, and Spirits industry the use of agency labour continues to be used as a tool to divide workplaces and pit our members against their fellow colleagues. Due to the failures of business's to appropriately recruit, "Temps" have

become a standing crutch for many companies across the Brewing, Whisky, and Spirits industry. Contractors find themselves typically boxed into roles across the production lines and other departments with no support for their development. In contrasting company behaviours, contractors are being trained and recruited into high paid roles typically performed by core members of staff whilst not being entitled to the benefits associated with these roles.

The sharpening increase in the recruitment and utilisation of contracted labour comes at a time where the militancy of our members is growing. Despite companies across the Brewing, Whisky, and Spirits industry showcasing record profits, our members are frequently denied pay rises which reflects their efforts in reaching record breaking levels of production – especially during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Our members and contractors are continuously forced to fight against each other for jobs. Agency workers who apply for full or part time positions regularly do not even make it past the first stage of recruitment. Companies continue to provide either very limited feedback in regard to their applications, or none at all.

Furthermore, the increasing of MUP (Minimum Unit Pricing) and the duty of alcohol continues to impact on pay, investment and growth within the Brewing, Whisky, and Spirits industry. Roughly, 73% of the average bottle of whisky is tax. Alcohol is therefore already the UK's most taxed commodity. This becomes a major talking and pressure point when pay talks begin. The punitive tax on a uniquely Scottish product impact Scottish workers in the most profound way - their ability to collectively bargain.

In order to ensure we can maintain a strong and effective union presence on our sites, we must have a unionised workforce consisting of both contractors and core staff. By ensuring that core staff and contractors are banded together then issues in both the workplace and wider company strategies become a far easier task to organize around; encroachment on hard fought for core workforce roles, inconsistent and obtuse recruitment practices, growing unbalancing of contractor to core staff ratios, unfair job stacking responsibilities, discrimination, workplace safety hazards, inadequate benefits, minimum unite pricing, and more.

GMB Scotland Branches and Shop Steward committees within the industry are well equipped to campaign, organise and win on issues with our purview of influence and responsibility.

We call on Congress to ratify our proposal on agency workers in both cyclical and non-cyclical manufacturing industries.

We should use our influence with the Labour Government to campaign and lobby for improved legislation on agency workers in manufacturing. Agency workers should:

- receive the same pay from day one, whereby the '12-week rule' would be known as the 'day-1 rule'.
- The ratio of agency workers should never exceed 20% agency to 80% permanent - sanctions for breaching this ratio should be punitive in nature.
- Agency workers should be entitled to a fulltime position following 12-months of unbroken service.

It is morally bankrupt that so many are employed in a regular and consistent employment for many years with no protections, safeguards or ability to plan in the UK 2025. The Labour Government have a historic majority, they must exercise that power to the benefit of working people.

This Congress calls for:

- The GMB to work with the British Government to establish legislation for a fair balance of contractor to core staff ratios across the Brewing, Whisky, and Spirits industry and other industries.
- The GMB to work with the British Government to establish legislation that tackles the discrimination that contractors face when applying for full and part time positions within the company that they have worked in Brewing, Whisky, and Spirits industry and other industries.

### **SHIELDHALL S04 BRANCH**

#### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Referred)*

NATHAN HENNEBRY (GMB Scotland): Moving this motion. “How will this affect the temps?”, “Get the bright workers on with us”. If we were to get the temps on board, the company would get on their knees with an offer for us.” As a rep, vice convenor and branch secretary in the whisky industry, these are just some of the words from my members when it comes to talking about organising alongside our agency workers.

Solidarity. That is what our moment is founded on. The capitalist class with their ownership of the means of production does not just work to divide us in our communities; they work damn hard to do it in our workplaces as well. They pit agency workers against core staff and core staff against agency to keep us from fully and effectively fighting our bosses. Agency workers can spend the best part of a decade working across sites and be continuously shot down from full-time positions. They only progress on the whim of management and that progression usually rubs against our own members through the lens of job encroachment.

It is vital that we remember, Congress, solidarity is what our movement is built on, which is why we need legislation that protects our members and agency workers; fostering a culture of solidarity wherever we organise. Failure to do so opens the door for the ruling class to foster their own culture in our workplaces, a culture of individualism, isolation and scabbery. I would fight until I am bloodied and broken-jawed for my members and I extend that same offer to my agency workers as well. For a stronger force in brewing, whisky and spirits, and everywhere else we organise, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nathan, thank you. Secunder?

ROBERT GRAHAM (GMB Scotland): Seconding Motion 157 - For a Stronger Force in the Brewing, Whisky and the Spirit Industry.

Congress, spare a few moments if you will to reflect on the experiences of our very own GMB members, and those agency staff who together produce many world-class profitable brands. However, we know that when external pressures affect profit or risk growth, it is very tempting for management to bear down on wage increases, employee benefits and job security, often opting for agency staff with different conditions and little or no job security, clearly putting profit before people. This motion seeks to recognise that our members and agency workers should benefit equally from trade union activity. That workers will not be pitted against each other, and the offer for everyone the dignity of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work is not negotiable. We support the appropriate use of agency staff, calling for a ratio to be established which keeps the balance proportionate across the workforce. This ratio should not be

voluntary but one which is established through legislation, with appropriate sanctions for breaches. Lastly agency staff in workplaces across all industries should have equal access to career advancement, training and the opportunity to achieve permanent status which is equitable and fair.

Making Work Better is just a strap line, it is a core GMB mission or driving force. Supporting this motion, Congress, will help build legislative protection and improve relation between permanent and agency staff, particularly in the whisky and spirits industry. It seems apt to conclude by saying Cheers! I second the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Cheers! Thank you, Robert. Mover of Motion 158?

## **REINDUSTRIALISATION OF SHIPBUILDING APPRENTICESHIPS: RETURNING TO PRACTICAL SKILLS OVER ACADEMIC RIGOUR**

### **MOTION 158**

#### **158. RE-INDUSTRIALISATION OF SHIPBUILDING APPRENTICESHIPS: RETURNING TO PRACTICAL SKILLS OVER ACADEMIC RIGOUR**

This Congress notes:

1. The UK shipbuilding industry has been a cornerstone of our industrial heritage, with a proud tradition of producing some of the world's finest vessels. However, decades of neglect, offshoring, and reduced investment have led to a decline in domestic shipbuilding capacity and expertise.
2. Shipbuilding apprenticeships, which were once a key pathway to skilled employment, have increasingly become more academic, with a growing focus on theoretical knowledge rather than

hands-on, practical skills. This shift has resulted in a generation of young people entering the industry who are ill-prepared for the practical demands of shipbuilding.

3. There has been a substantial gap between the skills taught in current apprenticeship programmes and the skills actually required by the industry, leading to significant skill shortages on the shop floor. Employers are increasingly reporting difficulty in recruiting workers with the necessary trade-based experience and expertise.

4. Shipbuilding is a vital part of the UK's national security, economic recovery, and the green transition, particularly with the rise of sustainable maritime technologies. It is essential that we invest in developing a new generation of shipbuilding apprentices who are trained to the highest standards in the traditional, hands-on methods of the trade, while also adapting to the future demands of the sector.

This congress believes:

1. The current approach to shipbuilding apprenticeships, with an overemphasis on academic qualifications and theoretical knowledge, is failing the next generation of workers and failing to meet the real-world needs of shipyards across the UK.

2. A shift back towards a more practical, hands-on apprenticeship model is necessary to properly equip young workers with the skills and experience they need to thrive in the shipbuilding industry. This approach should incorporate industry-led training, mentorship, and real-world experience in shipyards.

3. The UK's shipbuilding industry must be re-industrialised through investment in both apprenticeships and innovation, ensuring that the sector remains competitive and can meet the growing demand for green, sustainable ships and vessels.

4. Investment in the UK's shipbuilding apprenticeship system is crucial to ensure the long-term success of the industry and to create sustainable, well-paid, unionised jobs for working people in coastal and industrial communities.

This Congress resolves:

1. That GMB campaigns for a return to practical, skills-based training in shipbuilding apprenticeships, reducing the emphasis on academic qualifications and refocusing on hands on experience and traditional shipbuilding techniques.
2. That the UK government, in partnership with industry leaders, must significantly increase investment in shipbuilding apprenticeships to ensure young workers have access to high-quality, well-paid training opportunities that prepare them for the demands of the industry.
3. To support a national strategy for the re-industrialisation of shipbuilding in the UK, which will involve the creation of a modern apprenticeship system focused on practical skills development, incorporating innovation and sustainable technologies where appropriate.
4. To call for the establishment of stronger links between shipyards, training providers, unions and the apprenticeship system to ensure that training courses meet the real-world needs of the industry and prepare apprentices for the challenges of modern shipbuilding.
5. To advocate for the expansion of the apprenticeship levy to support the shipbuilding sector, ensuring that funding is available for the training of apprentices in all areas of shipbuilding, from design to fabrication, assembly, and maintenance.
6. To promote the value of skilled trades and practical training as a rewarding career path, providing opportunities for young people to enter a prestigious and vital industry that will play a key role in the UK's future

#### **DEVONPORT D19 BRANCH**

#### **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

RYAN WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): Hello President, Congress, moving

Motion 158. Shipbuilding is not just a part of our history; it is a part of our future. For generations our shipyards have been the beating heart of coastal communities, providing good, unionised jobs and building the vessels that have kept our nation safe and prosperous. Over recent decades we have seen a worrying decline, not just in orders but in the skills pipeline that sustains our industry. Too often young people enter shipbuilding apprenticeships, only to find themselves bogged down in paperwork and theory, rather than learning the craft hands on. We are producing apprentices who can pass exams but who struggle to weld a seam, fit a bulkhead or solve problems on the shop floor. This is not their fault. It is a failure in the system. Employers are crying out for skilled tradespeople. Our members on the ground can see the skills gap every day. We need to restore pride in the trades to ensure apprenticeships are a genuine route to a rewarding career, not just a tick-box exercise for funding and statistics.

This motion calls for a bold shift. It demands that we put practical industry-led training at the heart of shipbuilding apprenticeships and calls for real investment from government and industry so that young workers can learn from experienced mentors in real shipyards on real projects, and insist that our training keeps pace with green technologies so we are building the ships of future, not just the past.

Colleagues, this is more than skills. It is about hope. It is about giving our young people a future in an industry that matters. It is about rebuilding our communities, our economy and our national pride. Let's back this motion, let's fight for apprenticeships that work, for workers, for industry and for Britain. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brian. Secunder?

EMMA JAMES (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 158. The motion is not anti-educational; it is pro-skills, pro-opportunity and pro work. It is about giving young people in our coastal and industrial communities a future to believe in. This is about more than just jobs. It is about national security and economic growth and leading the world into a sustainable maritime technology. It is about ensuring the next generation of shipbuilders is ready for the challenges of modern, green and an innovative shipbuilding future. Let's send a clear message: the GMB stands for practical skills, quality apprenticeships and the reindustrialisation of British shipbuilding. Let's campaign for this investment, real training and a system that works for the workers. We know that the best shipbuilders are made in the yard, not just lecture halls. Let's rebuild our shipyards, our skills, our future together. Please support this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Emma. Does anybody want to speak in opposition? In that case, can I ask the CEC speaker Lynnette McGaffin to come to give the reply. Could I ask for movers and seconders of Motion 157.

LYNETTE MCGAFFIN (CEC): We are asking for Motion 157 to be referred. The CEC appreciates and understands the issues raised in the motion facing our members in the brewing, whisky and spirits industry. We are asking for the motion to be referred back to the CEC so that we can further understand how the motion calls will apply to the GMB industry positions more widely on contractors and agency staff in our other industries. Therefore, the CEC ask GMB Scotland to agree to refer Motion 157. Thank you! *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Lynette. The CEC is supporting Motions 154, 156 and 158. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Does GMB Scotland agree to refer? (*Agreed*) I do not need to take a vote on Motion 157. 154, 156 and 158 are all being supported so I will take those as one group. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? All those in favour of Motion 155 please show. Anyone against? That is carried as well. Thank you.

*Motion 157 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 154 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 156 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 158 Motion 155 was **CARRIED**.*

We now continue with motions under the Industrial and Economic Policy: Private Section, so can I have the mover of Composite 9, which I think is Midlands, to the rostrum please?

## **FIGHT TO STOP ABUSE OF AIRLINE STAFF**

### **COMPOSITE MOTION 9**

#### **Covering Motions:**

**147. Stop Abuse of Members Working at Airports and In Aviation – Midlands Region.**

**148. Fight Against Abuse of Aviation Staff – London Region.**

### **C9. FIGHT TO STOP ABUSE OF AVIATION STAFF**

This Congress needs to understand that there is a major issue that is taking its toll on so many of our members nationally in aviation. Verbal and physical abuse has sadly become the norm

in this crucial and important industry. Physical abuse is happening on a daily basis and verbally, numerous times a day.

This Congress notes that responses from a Regional Survey of airport workers in Stansted shows that 99% of our members who are female or LGBTQ suffer daily from abuse from passengers. This abuse varies from verbal attacks and threats of extreme violence against our women members.

No frontline worker should face this on a daily basis, and we call on Congress to support a campaign highlight this and to bring in measures for support, zero tolerance and measures to keep our members safe.

We ask this Congress to formally back the campaign 'Airport Workers Against Abuse'. This campaign aims to educate the travelling public and hold to account, employers and authorities to end this unedged violence and aggression.

### **Moving Region: Midlands Region**

### **Seconding Region: London Region**

*(Carried)*

NATHAN KEIGHTLEY (Midlands): Hello again. You are going to get sick of me!

Composite 9 - Fight to Stop Abuse of Aviation Staff.

This has been a long ongoing issue, let me tell you. I am going to give you a couple of stats. In 2023, 86.2 million UK residents visited countries abroad via an aeroplane. England and Wales had a crime rate of one crime per 10.2 people. In 2023, bearing in mind 276 million passengers passed through airports in the UK so that is either travelling abroad, transiting and so on and so forth, there were 6,000 crimes for 276 million people. A bit of a discrepancy there between airports and the normal crime rate. Bear in mind that out of those 6,000 that included our very good friends at HMRC and Border Force, for drug smuggling and whatever else goes on there. Basically, since the pandemic this has got out of hand at airports. Whether you work in the car park, whether you work in security, whether you work, as I do, as a ground handler, whether you work in Frankie and Benny's, the amount of abuse that goes on

is just off the Richter Scale, it really is. People go to work and they now expect to be either verbally or physically assaulted, and that is unacceptable, it really is. There is no mechanism to get any kind of statistics between airports, because they do not want to lose their precious rankings. The companies that are there once again they start losing their rankings, they start losing their customers, and things go all Pete Tong for them. There is no talking with each other. If I go to an airport authority today and say, "Right, can I have the stats on people that have been abused in your airport?" they will say they haven't got any or, "No one from our staff that's employed by the airport authority has a problem." I know that they do but they do not know that they are our members. People at the airport, it has become a bit of a thing, hasn't it, a national tradition now? The night before you cannot sleep, you probably have an hour or two, the taxi picks you up at 2 in the morning, the first thing you do at 3 in the morning is have a beer. No doubt most people in here can handle a pint or two. No issue there. But there are a lot that don't and can't. The number of people getting denied boarding on aircraft because they are under the influence of either alcohol or drugs is just ridiculous. The airlines themselves do not help with a lot of their policies. I want basically to get your support behind this motion. It is really important. We have loads of members there. Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nathan.

TERRY CLARKE (London): Good afternoon, Madam President and Congress. Stansted Branch, part of the proud and massive London Region. (*Applause*) First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am seconding Composite Motion 9 as a

ground handler myself. The fight against abuse of aviation staff, we at Stansted Airport are in total support of the GMB national campaign to stop our members and front-line workers being abused by bad-tempered passengers on a daily basis. The aviation branch at Stansted have completed a small survey where our members advised us they were abused, ranging from verbal, to threatening, to physical violence. The study shows that 95% of the staff that came forward were in the female or the LGBT+ categories.

Since the beginning of the campaign the GMB has organised a meeting for our Labour MPs at Westminster on 26 March seeking support. Congress, this is an ongoing campaign where the GMB is seeking and asking to achieve an aviation charter to protect our members in the workplace. Congress, I urge you to please support. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Terry, thank you. Mover of Motion 150?

## **STANDING UP FOR WORKERS IN THE UK'S HAIRDRESSING AND BARBERING INDUSTRY**

### **MOTION 150**

#### **150. STANDING UP FOR WORKERS IN THE UK'S HAIRDRESSING AND BARBERING INDUSTRY**

This Congress condemns the harmful employment practices rife within the UK's hairdressing and barbering industry.

Applauds the excellent work of the Hair and Barber Council and other organisations in highlighting the ubiquitous use of bogus self-employment and fire and re-hire.

Acknowledges that rapid industry growth (the UK hair and beauty industry is now worth £8.5bn and growing rapidly) combined with low barriers to entry and an unregulated profession leads to a proliferation of rogue traders and disastrous outcomes for both employment rights and customer protection.

Recognises that hairdressers and barbers in the UK are skilled tradespeople but that without industry regulation, the industry is to take action to end the unscrupulous working practices blighting working lives of those working in the hairdressing and barbering industry.

To press for political action to regulate the industry, ending a race to the bottom in terms of employee rights being exacerbated by rogue traders able to operate in an unregulated industry.

#### **A01 GMB ACORN BRANCH**

#### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

JULIA LONG (Midlands) President, Congress, moving Motion 150. Congress, this motion is about the bad practices within the hairdressing and barbering industry, an industry that is not regulated and allows rogue traders to openly operate throughout the UK. We should recognise that an industry that generates billions across the UK, employing over 35,000 people that are unregulated, which leads to thousands of young apprentice workers being failed and abused by a race to the bottom with their terms and conditions and also used as bogus self-employed.

Congress, the GMB needs to work with and support the UK's biggest hairdressing Foundation NHBF and our sponsored MPs to ensure that the Hairdressers (Registration) Act 1964, which is supposed to provide a register of qualified

hairdressers is strengthened and no longer done on a voluntary basis. We also have to ensure that local councils are no longer able to allow shops to be set up in all our towns and in people's back gardens unregulated. We have to be campaigning to make it a national mandatory regulation, and qualification should be fully confirmed before any licence is given. The industry faces many challenges especially when it comes to qualification fraud. When you talk to many of the front-line staff this comes out as one of their top concerns, where they believe having a national agenda and legislation with national policies would definitely help to take away the mistrust from their industry.

Congress, this is an opportunity for our union to work towards organising in this industry by not only supporting them but recognising we cannot stand by any longer while thousands of workers are leaving and genuine salons are closing because the political will is not there to support the legislation changes that are so desperately needed to get their customers' confidence and show they are all professional tradespeople wanting to clean up their industry. The majority of you in this room do use their services, and please, when you do, talk to them, tell them that we are on their side ask them to join our fight and to join our union and help us to clean up our industry. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Julia. Secunder?

SHAUN BARNES (Midlands): You all right? Good afternoon, Congress. I am from the Worksop Bassetlaw Branch within the Midland Region. (*Applause*) I am proudly seconding this motion as a first-time speaker, so bear with me. (*Applause*). The UK hairdressing and barbering industry is made up of highly skilled workers who are

proud to serve their customers. However, due to the unregulated nature of the industry, exploitation of these workers is rife. Phoney self-employment agreements and unscrupulous zero-hours contracts mean that many employees in the industry are taken advantage of. Our members are working hard in an ever-growing industry which is unfortunately becoming increasingly challenging to the workers due to the lack of government regulation. Nevertheless, our members are proud to organise within the GMB and are asking us to back them in their call for regulations and better protection and employment rights. This is the reason why I am standing here now to support them. All we ask is you guys here today to support us as well. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Shaun. Mover of Motion 151?

## **‘SERVICE WITH RESPECT’ CAMPAIGN FOR UK WATER INDUSTRY WORKERS**

### **MOTION 151**

#### **151. ‘SERVICE WITH RESPECT’ CAMPAIGN FOR UK WATER INDUSTRY WORKERS**

This Congress agrees that recent GMB water sector member surveys have shown significant levels of verbal and physical abuse to front-line and call centre workers. In addition to legacy ‘keyworker’ backlash, this seems likely due to the publicised bad performance of water companies in relation to polluting our water courses. GMB is the union for water workers and this level of abuse and violence cannot be tolerated. It is business leaders and regulators who have allowed bad practices and huge bonuses and dividends to be paid, not front-line staff.

This Congress calls on the CEC to bring a campaign of ‘Service with Respect’ for our water workers to ensure any discontent is aimed at those truly responsible for these failings.

## **L50 LEICESTER WATER BRANCH**

### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

JASON EVANS (Midlands): From the mighty Midlands Region. *(Applause)*

Comrades, moving Motion 151 - Service with Respect for Water Workers.

President, Congress, the water industry has rightly been in the public eye in recent years due mainly to the deplorable situation of sewage spills into our water courses and our coastlines. *(Applause)* However, we have many thousands of members and workers on the front-line, customer facing, answering customer calls night and day. These people are often the target for this public anger. Face-to-face workers' hi-vis outer wear will have "Water" on the back and it is literally a target on your back. We face the backlash and there has been increase in violence and abuse towards our water workers. It started with the key worker backlash after Covid and has only been made worse with the recent exposés into what has been going on in the industry over a good number of years. However, the attacks on our workers cannot be tolerated. It is not our front-line workers who have made the decisions to under-invest and to manipulate industry reporting for many years who are responsible. Those people tend to reside in ivory towers far away from the public gaze and accountability.

This motion calls for a campaign for "Service with Respect" for water workers to ensure that public anger does not harm our members, who are purely the people making the best of a bad lot in all weathers and in all locations night and day, in order to keep this vital service flowing. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jason. Secunder?

CHRISTOPHER ROCHE (Midlands): Hello. I am for the great and wonderful big Midlands Region. You know it! *(Applause)* Seconding Motion 151. President, Congress, having worked in the water industry for over 30 years, I have unfortunately witnessed and suffered abuse and violence at work from customers and the public. This is totally unacceptable and has worsened in recent years, even to the extent of a colleague and friend having suffered a life-changing injury in a machete attack. He was simply repairing a pipe in the street just keeping the water flowing in Wolverhampton. We need care and respect in providing our vital services for this business day and night. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris, nice and short and sweet. Any opposition for those motions? No. Can I ask Dave Clements from the CEC to give a reply please?

DAVE CLEMENTS (CEC): Speaking for the CEC. President, Congress, Motion 152 has been withdrawn so this is going to be the shortest CEC speech ever. The CEC is supporting Motion 150 with a qualification. The CEC very much agrees that hairdressing and barbering is a skilled job that should be longstanding career for those who join the industry. Our qualification is, because we do not have significant members in the industry, therefore, we will be unable to affect the industry in the way that the motion requests. However, should our membership grow, we will look to seek improvements and we will be guided by this motion going forward. The CEC are

asking for Motion 150 to be supported with a qualification, as I have set out. Thank you (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Dave. Does Midlands accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) I will put Composite 9 to the vote which the CEC are supporting. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? Motion 150, all those in favour, please show. Thank you. Anyone against? Motion 151, all those in favour, please show. Thank you. Anyone against. That is also carried.

*Composite 9 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 150 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 151 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Guest Speaker: Dr Victoria McCloud**

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Congress, it gives me great pleasure to welcome our guest speaker for this afternoon, who I am proud to say is also a GMB member and activist. Dr Victoria McCloud is a former judge in the High Court. She is the UK's first, and probably the world's first openly trans judge, having come out in the 1990s when she was a barrister. However, last year Victoria was forced to leave her job after receiving abuse for being trans-gender. She was also refused permission to argue for trans people's rights in the recent disastrous case brought to the Supreme Court, with no reasons given by the judges. Victoria is a founding member of the GMB Judges' Branch and fought the case of *McCloud v Ministry of Justice*. Her work brought down the Coalition Government's plans to cut public sector pensions for most areas of the

sector resulting in the gradual return of billions of pounds in pensions to working people. (*Applause*) She risked her job to do so in the face of opposition from press, government and senior judges. Victoria, welcome, please come to the rostrum. (*Applause*)

VICTORIA MCCLOUD: President, Congress, I am a first-time speaker here, and I have to say how happy I am to see you all. (*Applause*) I have to say when I founded the Judges' Branch, I never thought I would end up speaking to all my friends here, and it really is a great honour. And thank you for the round of applause for the *McCloud* case, which is probably the thing I am most proud of in my life, returning those pensions in that way.

You know what I am here to talk about. I am here to talk about the case that has been correctly described as a disastrous case of *For Women Scotland*, which is the case that has essentially raised sex equality rights for trans people and in the process has redefined the meaning of the word "lesbian" and the meaning of the word "woman", and has created a situation now where, frankly, many of us don't know what sex we are supposed to be for any given purpose. What they did was change the meaning of "woman", but only for some purposes, so it is extremely difficult to know where one stands now.

I am just going to highlight some of the very serious concerns and impacts that are affecting people now. These impacts are not just affecting trans people; they are affecting and placing at risk all women, especially lesbians, but all women. I hope to make that clear in just the five minutes or so that I have.

First, part of this judgment refers to appearance. Apparently, I am supposed to use the men's loos but I can be excluded from the men's loos if I look too female. It introduced a subjective notion of what it is to be a woman or a man, alongside some sort of vague legal notion of biological sex which is not even a recognised medical matter. Lesbian people now and people of non-conventional female appearance, particularly those who are not white, are getting more abuse because they are suspected of being trans. We have seen some of the vicious attacks that have been made on some women, for example, in sport, and you can see that they are generally non-white are and that is based on prejudice about what femininity is. (*Applause*)

Workplaces are in confusion. People do not know which loo to use. Employers do not know what to do. We are getting situations, as I said, where people like me are getting told to use the men's loos, or, and this is one of the things that makes me the most angry as someone whose parents were disabled in later life, we are being told go and occupy disabled people's spaces and keep them waiting because we have to use the disabled people's loos ourselves. And, colleagues, that is not fair or right. Mums and dads with kids. You have a mother and a father and a classic family. Let's say the father happens to be a trans man, they have now been redefined as lesbian. Nobody asked, let's say, the wife in that relationship who has never regarded herself as a lesbian but now she is according to this judgment, against her will. Those voices were not heard in the Supreme Court, any more than mine was and any more than the voices of any trans people were at any stage in that case from start to finish. There is abuse and threat across the UK not just to trans people but to anyone who is now deemed less than perfectly female - more so than ever before.

I started the Trans XR Network, which is growing rapidly and it consists of people who are helping themselves to get out of the country. I have already left the country. I emigrated to Ireland last year after the story that you have heard. More and more people from the trans, inter-sex and non-binary communities are now leaving. In many instances those are people who are very highly achieving specialists - engineers, nuclear safety people, medics, accountants, computer programmers. Those people in many instances have never been out at work. Nobody even knows they are trans but they are going to be outed on an enormous scale, and in some instances are fearing that they are going to be forced to use the wrong facilities at work. It will lead to an epidemic of discrimination and epidemic of harm to mental health. That is partly why people are leaving.

Recently the Tories proposed a register of trans people. Why? Well so that they can enforce these new rules, but, colleagues, it is deeply disappointing that our current Government is pursuing identity cards which will inevitably function in the same way. That is frankly sinister. And all people, colleagues, we have Wes Streeting in the NHS who is actively pursuing the creation of segregation and isolation wards for trans people so as to protect others from us. We pose no risk. Rather, others often pose a risk to us. But worst of all, colleagues, worst of all, what we have now, and this is official, across the country the police have introduced rules that if a woman who is believed to be trans is to be strip searched, it must be done by a man. We must never forget Sarah Everard. This is a recipe for sexual assault either by police or anyone posing as police on the pretext that they thought the person they were strip-searching was trans. That is

probably the most disgusting development in the law I have seen in my lifetime, since section 28.

So colleagues, to wrap it up, please take every opportunity you can to show solidarity with your trans, non-binary and inter-sex colleagues and all women at this time. Please make it clear to everyone that this is happening in our country now, but as workers and as human beings, not in our name. Thank you. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: We have had some powerful speakers today in very different ways. Victoria, thank you so much for being here. GMB will always show solidarity and allyship to trans, binary and non-binary people. Thank you. (*Applause*)

## **CEC Statement: Industrial Strategy & Infrastructure**

### **CEC Statement: Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure**

**Responsibility, resilience, redistribution: “You can’t project resilience if your infrastructure is owned by the rest of the world.”**

- 1.1 Congress 2025 recognises the precarity of Britain’s position in a changing and increasingly volatile world. It is important to acknowledge the world has changed and GMB members are not immune. The impact of the crises of capital, climate and conflict are all encompassing.
- 1.2 The punitive tariff war waged by the US President Donald Trump signals a new and uncertain era for global trade and international relations. Globalisation now looks to be over, and a new economic order is emerging, based around domestic interests as opposed to uninhibited free trade. Climate change is a growing and existential threat. Britain must transition its industries and society to help fulfil our climate obligations, but the transition debate is increasingly polarised by self-interest and ideology. Conflict in Ukraine and the Trump administration’s policy shift towards Russia, combined with territorial claims on Greenland, poses hard questions for the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Alliance) alliance and continental security. The UK Government has already committed to raise Defence spending and to re-prioritise national security.
- 1.3 A holistic plan to confront these real-world realities is needed, but it must be developed from a position of historically comparative economic and industrial weakness, and low levels of public trust in British politics and institutions. The impact of politically driven austerity has decimated our vital public services. Our productivity base has been hollowed out by a multi-generational failure to defend British manufacturing while a reliance on services has soared. Economic redistribution tied to critical infrastructure is more likely to go into the pockets of private equity or sovereign wealth funds than our own exchequer. The rapid advancement of disruptive new AI (Artificial Intelligence) will fundamentally change the world of work and with it the employment experience of our members.
- 1.4 2025 is a genuine point of inflection. The decisions made in the here and now will have profound consequences for jobs, pay and conditions across our nations and regions over the next generation, and with it the very future of our union. Yet in the face of deep and existential threats there are also opportunities to rebuild prosperity and achieve social, political, and economic security for all.
- 1.5 GMB is clear that a real-world industrial strategy for Britain’s future is essential to mitigate threats and to maximise the opportunities facing our country. This requires the complete rejection of ‘business as usual’ and the continuation of 40 years of failed neoliberal policies. Instead, we need to forge cooperation between governments, industries and unions, placing workers’ voices at the centre of a radical and fresh dialogue. The objectives are straightforward: industrial co-ordination based upon central planning; taking direct responsibility for the core components of industry; investing in and building energy, infrastructure and manufacturing resilience; and then, ensuring that we redistribute the gains into our public services and wider society.
- 1.6 The people best placed to make these arguments, and achieve these fundamental changes, are GMB members. Amid crises and change, we see the big picture but remain true to our core values: We are a union of jobs, social justice and solidarity. That is why GMB has created

'Workers Power the Future'.<sup>i</sup> The campaign is bringing together workplace reps from across the energy sector and energy-intensive manufacturing industries to organise and engage directly with governments and industries to capture the powers of a homegrown, real-world industrial strategy.

- 1.7 The threats to our members' livelihoods and prosperity, and with it the future vitality of our union, are clear and real, but so are the opportunities to transform our nations and regions, through industrial and infrastructural renewal, if we campaign and organise for it. By doing this we can help bring about better trade unionism, industries and governance to confront the challenges of our times.
- 1.8 Britain cannot go it alone in the world and isolationism is a poor prescription for any country's prospects. As a union, we are internationalist and support mutually beneficial trading relationships with democratic, progressive, and friendly states. We recognise the inherent dangers of rising populism and nationalism in Western democracies. However, neither should we be increasingly dependent on the rest of the world for the things we need, like raw materials, energy and skills. As the ongoing situation at British Steel in Scunthorpe illustrates, we must take a greater industrial responsibility for the things we can, for what we can produce onshore for the betterment of jobs, prosperity, security and climate.
- 1.9 That starts with energy and how we heat our homes, keep the lights on, and industry powered. To understand Britain's position, we need to see things as they are. Electricity supply from renewable sources increased in 2024 to half of generation on the days when the wind blows, but Britain is still heavily dependent on gas. Domestic gas production was the equivalent of half of total demand in 2024 while the remainder was met by imports, mainly Norwegian natural gas but also LNG (liquefied natural gas) from the U.S, Qatar and Peru. Around four-fifths of households are gas dependent for heat and one-third of our average annual electricity supply is gas generated.<sup>ii</sup>
- 1.10 To put that into context of the UK Government's 2030 clean power ambitions, that one-third of electricity from gas-fire stations would need to come offline to meet the political aspiration.<sup>iii</sup> At the same time, around 15 per cent (6.5 GW) of current electricity generation baseload will cease entirely by 2030 when the existing nuclear fleet enters full decommissioning. Hinkley Point C is scheduled to start generation in the early 2030's and the Sizewell C development thereafter, with a total generation capacity of around 6GW. The anticipated shortfall of constant domestic supply from nuclear by the end of this decade will likely be covered by supplies from continental interconnectors.
- 1.11 The outlook is further complicated by the UK Government's manifesto commitment to ban future North Sea oil and gas exploration and production licences. It means that Britain would need to increase its dependencies on imported gas supplies to support its projected demands up to 2050, estimated to be around 13 billion to 15 billion barrels of oil and gas equivalent.<sup>iv</sup> It means that in the short to medium term at least, the UK is in a precarious place in terms of energy security, caught between the idealism of a fully green future and the pragmatic pull of industry and pressing contemporary demands to maintain living standards.
- 1.12 A more balanced and resilient energy mix would see government committing to new nuclear baseload and domestic production contributing to the oil and gas we still need as vital components in the national energy supply, alongside established renewable and emerging low-carbon sources. This would ensure greater energy security, reduce dependencies upon increasing importations, volatile international markets, while supporting high quality jobs and apprenticeships that can drive regional growth and development.
- 1.13 The questions around Britain's future energy resilience and political policy choices are also inextricably linked to its manufacturing prospects, and now, as a direct consequence of the U.S defence policy shifts towards NATO, our country's defence and security. How we are going to source power for industry, what the cost of it will be, how we reduce the emissions of that production and - fundamentally for our union - will we have the people and places needed to compete for and onshore more of these jobs of the future?
- 1.14 It is agreed, across the political spectrum, that Defence spending will have to rise. The GMB's role is threefold: to ensure that this increased investment results in greater opportunities, more and better work, and improved conditions for our members employed in the Defence sector; to make sure that this increase in expenditure is enabled through sustainable progressive taxation and not by making cuts in other areas, endangering jobs in the public services; and that the end result is a robust defence of the people, and common wealth, of this nation rather than the greenlighting of bellicose military adventures across the globe.
- 1.15 Consequently, GMB believes that central planning is key; that UK defence contracts should, by default, be awarded to UK companies and consortia; that trade union access, membership and consultation is vital to a healthy, harmonious and prosperous defence industry; that investment is the key to economic security and growth; and that this economic deterrence - through technological advance and rising domestic prosperity - is capable of becoming another important form of military deterrence in securing the future of our nation.
- 1.16 Revitalisation of this sector will not happen by chance but rather through long-term planning and investment. This will necessitate the placing of greater value upon industrial and technological skills, the offering of a clear educational and career route into meaningful, high wage, highly skilled jobs, and a reconfiguring of the education sector to facilitate this transformation. This will require the provision of education and training that deliver meaningful - and nationally recognised - qualifications that are tailored to the needs of the defence sector and wider manufacturing industry.
- 1.17 A UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) style clearing house for UK wide apprenticeships would be a starting point, together with a single point of application and entry. It is vital that qualifications and standards are transferable and readily appreciable by employers so that young workers are not tied to a single site or firm as their bespoke qualifications are meaningless outside of one employer. We wish to see the end of a situation whereby young welders trained by one firm are immediately poached by another (capable of offering higher wages) upon their qualification.
- 1.18 This will necessitate work - and planning - across governmental departments (not least between the MoD and Education), together with the development of industry specific qualifications by industry specialists, the raising of pedagogical standards across the FE (Further Education) sector, and the establishment of specialised institutes for shipbuilding and aeronautics. Modern apprenticeships need to be 're-industrialised', with more time spent on the shop floor and placed within a nationally recognised framework, with a clear path charted to careers within industry for our young women and men.
- 1.19 At the same time, the crises of recruitment in the services (and the Royal Navy, in particular) needs to be addressed. There is little point in commissioning new hardware and vessels if there are not the women and men to crew them. This situation can only be remedied through increases in pay, conditions, and opportunities for service personnel - which need to be mirrored in those of the support, manufacturing, and ancillary chains that support them: from BAE engineers to welders at Babcock, and the predominantly women cleaners and canteen workers at the Royal Dockyards.

- 1.20 To this end, Congress is concerned that existing UK Government policies fail to fully recognise industrial, economic and security interdependencies across the broad energy and energy-intensive manufacturing sectors.
- 1.21 In simple terms, Britain's foundation industries, like steel, cement, ceramics, chemicals and glass require a gas feedstock for mass production, as does shipbuilding, and the development of technologies like carbon capture to mitigate the emissions of that production. Yet proposed DESNZ (Department of Energy Security and Net Zero) regulatory policies for the future of North Sea oil and gas production call for a de facto ban on future exploration and production licenses and an acceleration of further dependencies on oil and gas imports to support projected demand.
- 1.22 Ministers either do not recognise or are ignoring real world facts that independently registered operators currently producing 50 per cent of domestic oil and gas from the North Sea also hold the majority of existing carbon capture licenses.<sup>v</sup> A consequence of this being the risks of policies that deter domestic investment and production in the North Sea could also impact the development and scale of the emerging carbon capture sector required to support the reduction of carbon emissions from hard-to-abate industries.
- 1.23 This also has deeper risks and consequences for economic distribution. The HM Treasury consultation concerning the offshore sector's future fiscal framework expects a further £19 billion in tax receipts from the North Sea between now and 2030 to support public finances and the energy transition.<sup>vi</sup> That aspiration for economic redistribution from domestic oil and gas production won't be realised if existing offshore operators lose confidence in the North Sea as a stable and viable jurisdiction. This is indicative of the lack of a proper thinking concerning our industrial strategy.
- 1.24 GMB has consistently voiced its members concerns about Government energy and industrial policies pursuing a sprint to clean power by 2030 when the journey to fulfilling Britain's climate obligations is a generational marathon from now until 2050. In the face of real and existential climate crisis, the false dichotomy of climate fundamentalism or diversionary populism can only be overcome through a pragmatic industrial strategy for Britain's transition that recognises the distinct challenges facing an island nation in uncertain geo-political times.
- 1.25 Congress agrees that in difficult and uncertain times, it should be the job of any Government to address weaknesses while maximising strengths. In terms of strengths, Britain is abundant in natural resources, wind, sea, and yes, the oil and gas on which we still depend and will still need until 2050 and beyond. Our energy industries are highly interdependent in terms of investment, innovation, and skills. We have a safe and reliable national transmission system for gas that is a pillar of our economy and fit for diversification of supply for household and industrial demand. Britain still has the potential to be a global leader and a continental hub for vital carbon capture and hydrogen technologies needed to decarbonise industry and transportation and help meet our climate obligations.
- 1.26 Our weaknesses are also clear and many. The electricity grid does not yet have the connectivity or storage capacity for the acceleration of low-carbon power from wind, solar and nuclear, let alone the opportunities around emerging options like hydrogen. Developers face long bottlenecks for connections and the level of change required to modernise the grid for low-carbon power has been described by industry analysts as 'mind-boggling'. A programme of new nuclear is desperately needed to underpin constant electricity supply and work towards the restoration of peak production levels in the mid-1990s that delivered around one-quarter of total supply.
- 1.27 There is insufficient manufacturing capacity and supply chain readiness to compete for more energy infrastructure projects from the domestic and global markets. Against a backdrop of long-term industrial decline, this is why contracts and jobs to deliver and support the expansion of industries like wind and solar power sector have been largely offshored to the rest of the world.
- 1.28 We have a skills crisis in vocational trades and STEM disciplines (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) that blunts our competitiveness and future resilience. The roots of this crisis are deep and many. Vocational skills are undervalued and more than £1 billion a year of Apprenticeship Levy funding is unspent on training. Artificial barriers are locking talented applicants out of higher-paying roles at a time of labour shortages. Childcare costs are among the highest in the world (among the top 5 countries in the OECD).<sup>vii</sup> We face the cliff-edge of an ageing population (one-fifth of existing workers in the energy sector will retire by 2030).<sup>viii</sup>
- 1.29 And we have crisis of control and ownership. Britain has reached an inevitable destination point after four decades of political failure; rooted in Thatcher-era privatisation and de-regulation of our critical infrastructure and utilities like transport and water, exacerbated by the embrace of an economic globalisation that hollowed-out our production base and left working-class communities behind, and compounded by the austerity and casino-capitalism that's blighted the last fourteen years.
- 1.30 The way forward lies in the return of key industries, such as steel and water, to public ownership. The production of virgin steel is the foundation of our national, industrial base. It makes all else possible. Consequently, Scunthorpe – as our last centre of production – must be nationalised, forthwith, and incorporated into a national plan that harnesses the nation's productive forces and guarantees long term prosperity for the industry.
- 1.31 Allied to this is the question of sufficient levels of investment, development, and the reforging of the nation's industrial base. Lack of investment threatens the livelihoods of our members employed in the pharmaceutical industry, as patents expire, and has already resulted in the cancellation of a projected £450 million expansion to AstraZenica's Liverpool vaccination plant.<sup>ix</sup> Growth from oncology, biopharmaceuticals and rare disease research is only going to be delivered effectively through infrastructure investment and directed research and development, that brings prosperity together with the amelioration of human suffering. Greater governmental involvement with planning offers the opportunity to integrate and sustain research across UK universities, eliminating competition and duplication, and putting medical advance at the service of the people.
- 1.32 The best and most obvious way to achieve this and to deliver the resources necessary to implement a viable industrial plan is to adopt a policy of progressive taxation, in order to boost treasury receipts and enable effective state intervention. As all wealth is socially created, GMB advocates a robust tax policy designed to ensure that the nation's wealth is democratic and accountable, and made available for industrial investment and planning. Progressive redistribution through taxation not only redresses structural inequalities within society (benefitting our members in social care, education, and the NHS) but is the primary means by which our union's demands for the rebuilding of British industry can be funded. With increased tax revenue comes a fundamental shift in the distribution of power in our society; strengthening the welfare state; enabling industrial democracy; and rebalancing market power between labour and capital.

- 1.33 Let's be clear that national decline in the name of climate change should not be an international obligation, we already understand the price of failure on energy and industrial policy, but our international obligations to the climate and our responsibilities as a credible member of the global community should be incontrovertible. That means we should see things for what they are, recognise the world has changed.
- 1.34 It also begs the obvious question: why would we persevere with a failed status quo and expect positive outcomes, particularly where the stakes are so high? It won't unlock the unprecedented levels of investment needed to achieve greater energy independence through the decarbonisation agenda. It won't support the innovators in our manufacturing sector who need cleaner and constant power to secure their futures. It won't rebuild trust in workplaces and communities through more jobs and prosperity after years in the grip of austerity, pandemic, and inflation.
- 1.35 We need to unleash the power of an active state that's prepared to take direct responsibility for what it must through nationalisation of critical assets and infrastructure where necessary, bring new and emerging technologies to scale through strategic stake-holding and procurement reform, and give the private sector confidence and stability to turn-on investment where it's needed to help create badly needed jobs and prosperity across our nations and regions.
- 1.36 Our job as a trade union is to campaign and organise to ensure these jobs both remain and become *good union jobs*. We recognise the world has changed but we are also aware a future is not guaranteed for our union or our movement – trade union density is rubbing along at around one-fifth of the total workforce and all key indicators point towards decline, not growth.\* Yet amid threat there is also opportunity. Workers Power the Future gives us an opportunity to replace political rhetoric with rigour and change the culture of our industrial relations to deliver an industrial strategy through better cooperation between union members, industry leaders, and Government ministers.
- 1.37 This is what we mean by calling for greater responsibility, resilience and redistribution, now and over the next generation. And we all have our part to play. There are no panaceas, but Congress is resolute that a proper industrial strategy holds the key to 'fixing the foundations' of Britain and redefining our place in the world - and with it the prospects for our shared prosperity, security and health. These are noble aspirations that are entirely attainable, provided that the political will and industrial vision are there, ensuring that UK manufacture, research, and design are placed at the forefront of industrial revival.
- 1.38 **To this end, GMB urges the adoption of:**
- A national plan for industry and investment.
  - The introduction of progressive, redistributive, taxation.
  - A true partnership between private and public investment, that puts well-paid, union jobs at its heart.
  - A programme of nationalisation and government stakes in strategic industries, beginning with steel (with Scunthorpe at the centre) but coming to encompass water and utilities, together with transport.
  - The rejection of the failed policies, and savage economic ideology, of neoliberalism.
  - The adoption of industrial co-ordination that puts workers' voices, skills, and insights at the epicentre of national renewal and prosperity.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We now move on to our second CEC Statement for today, on Strategy and Infrastructure. Can I call on Mathew Williams to move the report.

MATHEW WILLIAMS (CEC) Afternoon, everyone, Congress. CEC Special Report: Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure. President, Congress, comrades, friends, I am moving the CEC Statement on Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure.

In the development of the statement, it was my fellow CEC representative North East, Yorkshire & Humberside Congress delegate Dave Douglas who said, “You can’t project resilience if the infrastructure is owned by the rest of the world.” Well said! Congress, not for the first time, not for the last, it is GMB members who have diagnosed

the problems facing our country and done the serious thinking and hard work that underpins advances in our economy. And just like a good trade union should, we call out the problems and we also offer practical proposals to fix them. This is exactly what this statement does.

The report recognises at the same time the significant change and challenges, and that a proper industrial strategy for Britain must be the foundation of our energy, security, manufacturing ambitions with our prospective economic growth and climate obligations. We know this will not be easy. The decline of British industry has been a chronic process over generations, exacerbated further by the 14 years of ruinous Tory rule. The Labour Government has been set up to fail by the Cameron, May, Johnson, Truss and Sunak Administrations and inherited a shredded industrial base, a ravaged economy and deep and pernicious social inequality, but, rest assured, Labour will find GMB an honest friend and they will engage properly with us and with our members, and set about forging a plan of prosperity based around manufacturing and investment that rebalances the powers to society.

Congress, rather than simply make demands for a future Utopia, the report also sets out how GMB members are campaigning and organising in order to confront profound challenges to bring about positive economic, industrial and social changes across our nations and regions. We will work with our politicians. We won't wait on them. Workers Power the Future isn't just a headline, it is the bringing of living and breathing grass-roots campaigns up and down this country; from our reps in the Midlands driving the manufacturing agenda, to the gas and foundation industry reps in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside holding the Government to account on their policies.

GMB recognises the demands of the real world and the challenges it represents. We do not run and hide from reality by indulging in empty rhetoric and transitional demands. We campaign and organise, get in front of the challenge and influence the decision-making and the policies that affect our livelihoods. That is what we do best. The UK cannot go it alone in the world. A race to the bottom through idealisation and populism is a poor prescription for any nation's future. However, a resilient country is one that takes a greater responsibility and offers genuine transformative opportunities for workers and communities across the United Kingdom. To this end we need to: rebuild our manufacturing and skills bases to help deliver our security needs; maximise home-grown energy to keep the lights on, homes warm and industry powered; take ownership of the core materials and utilities we need in the first place: steel, water, transport. And all of this underpinned by the greater certainty and stability that a proper industrial strategy for Britain can provide, where the voices and participation of GMB members at the very heart of the development and delivery, providing good, secure, rewarding unionised jobs for all our people. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Mathew. Colin Gunter to second, please?

COLIN GUNTER (CEC): President, Congress, comrades and friends, seconding the CEC Statement on Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure. Congress, the Statement provides both a campaigning and policy foundation for our members to build this distinctly GMB approach to industrial strategy. It is honest in its analysis on defence spending and security, on domestic energy demand and climate, and on the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), but it is hugely inspirational and aspirational. At a time

when the debates on emotive issues such as climate security and prosperity are becoming increasingly polarised and exploited by ideologists and populists alike, it is a pragmatic and unifying antidote. Fundamentally, its proposals are rooted in the real world and those issues that directly affect our members. It will resonate with working people in working-class communities up and down the country, as we call for taking greater responsibility for our emissions by maximising home-grown energy production while not wavering on our climate targets, rebuilding the decimated manufacturing skill bases, to insource more contracts and job support in defence renewal, and renewable growth within a framework of central planning. Putting trade union values at the heart of industrial policy and achieving meaningful co-operation with industry on issues of mutual support and benefit.

Central to this is the stated commitment to funding industrial research and development, ensuring that the broadest shoulders to carry the biggest responsibility through progressive taxation, while creating industrial stability in order to invest those growing tax revenues in good union jobs.

Congress, we reject a future where Britain export responsibilities and import virtue for raw materials, energy and emissions. We need to fix the foundations of the country while transitioning to net zero. When we talk about responsibility, resilience and redistribution this is what we mean. We need to do more of the heavy lifting ourselves, on energy, manufacturing, security and climate, and we need an industrial strategy that supports this. The statement sets out how this can be achieved for the good and commonwealth of all of us. I support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Can I have the first delegate from Wales & South West to respond?

MARTINA VRAJITORU (Wales & South West): President, Congress, speaking in support of the Statement. Congress, I speak in full support of the CEC Statement on Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure because its message is not just timely, it is urgent. It is personal to every community we serve. Let's be clear, the world has changed. Our members feel it every day. From Port Talbot to Plymouth, from Barry Island to Bristol, we know what it means to weather economic storms. We have seen our industries hollowed out, our public services battered by austerity and our communities left behind by decades of failed policies. The CEC statement recognises what we have all been shouting about for years - business as usual is over. The old ways of selling our assets or leaving our energy security in the hands of foreign interests, of letting private equity drain the life from our public good - those days must end. We need a real home-grown industrial strategy, one that puts workers' voices at its heart, one that builds resilience not just for the economy but for every family in every town and village across our regions.

In our region, we know the value of energy, of manufacturing, of skilled work. We see the opportunities of the future in the nuclear at Hinckley Point C, where I work, but also in the promises of hydrogen and carbon capture. But we also know the risk of moving too fast, of leaving communities behind in the rush to a green future. Our members want to be part of the solution. They want good jobs, fair pay and a say in how we transition. They want the power of the future not be overpowered by it. That is why I am proud of GMB's campaign "Workers Power the Future". It is about

bringing together our reps, our members, our communities to demand a seat at the table: to insist that the gains of industrial renewal are shared, that apprenticeships and skills are real and meaningful, not just empty promises, that our young people see a future in steel, in shipbuilding, in engineering, and that those jobs are secure, unionised and well paid.

We must not repeat the mistakes of the past where the wealth created in our regions ends up in the pockets of distant shareholders or is lost to overseas' interests. We need investment in our infrastructure, in our grid, in our railways and roads, in our ports and our people. We need a Government that understands that energy security is national security, and that means supporting domestic production, supporting new nuclear and making sure our transition is just and fair and led by those who do the work.

And let's be clear, this is not about turning our backs on the world. Wales and the South West are proud outward-looking places but we cannot be left dependent on imports for the basics of life - energy, raw materials, skills. We must take responsibility for what we can do here for the sake of our jobs, our prosperity and our security.

Congress, the CEC Statement is a call to action. It is a blueprint for hope. It is a promise that if we organise, if we campaign, if we put our members at the centre, we can rebuild our industries, restore our communities and renew our union. Let's Power the Future Together! Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Martina. Southern Region.

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Supporting the CEC Special Report on Industrialisation. Comrades, we have had 40 years of vandalism that has destroyed Britain's manufacturing base. We all know the chainsaw that was taken to our manufacturing by Margaret Thatcher but let us remember that a million manufacturing jobs were lost under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown through having the pound valued too high to benefit the City of London, at the expense of skilled working-class jobs around the country. If I just look back at my own life, because I think we have had something which has been a long-running problem and is now becoming urgent, and we are at the point where manufacturing could die altogether, I spent 25 years working in manufacturing. I was just thinking back. I started in Motorola in 2020 and at that time we had factories in Swindon, Basingstoke and one in Scotland, and employed something like 9,000 people across the UK. There is now no Motorola manufacturing in the UK. And what happened? Those jobs went overseas to Poland. It has always made me laugh when people say leave the EU and lose jobs. We lost our jobs because we were in the EU and our jobs went over there. All jobs could have been kept in the UK because it was critical infrastructure, and a progressive and patriotic Government would have defended our critical national infrastructure manufacturing in this country. Look at the failings of the politicians at Honda and Cooper Tires in our neck of the woods, where local politicians, both Labour and Conservative, blocked absolutely necessary and proportionate planning requests from the factories to expand and because they could not expand. Honda closed altogether and Cooper Tires moved to Serbia. There are 11 factories in my branch now, and I would like to give a shout-out to Jon Watts from Lyons Seafood here as a delegate, and Adrian Kesby(?) from Gainsborough Beds, who is up in the visitors' gallery. Because our manufacturing members come to

our branch meeting every month and they tell a terrible story of people being on short time and there being no orders.

And why? Because energy costs are ridiculous. We have got the highest energy costs in the developing world and it is killing us. Our products are too expensive because the energy is too expensive for us to be cost-effective. (*Applause*) You would think this would be an absolutely urgent matter for politicians, but a couple of years ago I went to the Labour Party South West Conference and I was astounded to hear delegates openly saying we need to close all of British manufacturing for the environment. This is the middle-class oddballs who knit mung beans, but the careerist politicians are thinking, “We are going to appease them because we can’t lose votes to the Greens in Exeter and Bristol”, so those jobs are being jeopardised.

That is what I needed to say, apart from I really think Keir Starmer should sack Ed Miliband and get a proper energy policy. (*Applause*) I just wanted to say another point. In the union world we do not talk about this very much, but what is very good in the report is it talks about the recruitment crisis in our armed forces, and of course, part of the recruitment crisis is that has been hammered by private sector companies, but in the olden days I have seen this a lot ---

THE PRESIDENT: Andy, you are going to have to wind up, please.

ANDY NEWMAN: One second ---

THE PRESIDENT: One second.

ANDY NEWMAN: There is a pipeline of apprenticeships from the REME, Signals, RAF and Navy into manufacturing jobs and that is why people go into the Services, to get their apprenticeships. If there is no manufacturing jobs there is no incentive to go and get those apprenticeships in the Services. Thank you very much. We support the report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. GMB Scotland?

JOHN CHANNON (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, I am from the centre of the world, Scotland, in support of the Statement on Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure. I am just going to say I started off my working career as a coal miner, and that was many, many years ago. To my colleagues in Yorkshire, you are going to have support from me on the injustice at Orgreave in a week's time. That is enough of that one.

Congress, thankfully, the Government has changed after 14 years of Tory misrule. We now have the opportunity to undo the damage they have done, replacing their race to the bottom with a strategy that puts investments, jobs and workers first. The undermining and privatisation of our industrial base has been proven to be fantasy economics. If it was not already obvious then the global pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the weakening ties across the West is certainly exposing how vulnerable it is. What comes next is uncertain and we cannot go it alone, but we have to be in a position to be able to face up to the challenges whenever and however they arise.

There is no truer example of this than our energy production, and no one knows it better than Scotland: an oil-rich, gas-rich nation which has been promised a green jobs revolution by political leaders in all colours of rosettes, only for them to be broken. The cart has been put well before the horse. Workers at our metal fabrication yard look on while turbines are brought in in diesel barges from free ports across the globe and 400 workers leave Grangemouth's gates for the last time.

Figures from Robert Gordon University show that the trickle of job losses could turn into a torrent, with a Grangemouth being lost from the North Sea every two workers, with workers having nowhere to go. This is a cost on workers, their families and communities which I can actually see, as it happened to me being a miner, but it also undermines our energy security and affordability while we continue to rely on others to meet our needs. Government need to be able to put sound bites aside and understand the realities of political aspirations. When the Scottish Government Heat in Buildings Bill brushed against it, it was eventually watered down. The Bill would have forced homeowners to scrap their gas boilers, and the entire gas workforce along with it: a needless art when progress is being made with hydrogen homes heating, which can spell a future for the gas workforce. The costs are too great to the workers and households for politicians to get this wrong. We cannot create a second generation of miners. Congress, support this statement. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, John, thank you. North West & Irish Region?

CHRIS BAUGH (North West & Irish): President, Congress, I am a first-time Congress speaker. In giving support to the CEC Statement, it is important to point out my branch

tabled Motion 264 on transition along with five other motions covering climate change, and although my branch would have preferred the motion to have remained on the agenda and be tabled for debate, the region took the view that, because there is much in common between the motion and the CEC Statement, along with other climate motions, we agreed to the CEC request to withdraw the motion. So, in the short time available my branch wishes to support the CEC Statement but with two important qualifications.

First, the CEC statement does not include the specific proposal in Motion 264 to consult branches and young members on setting up a network of GMB reps interested in the issue of climate change, and I hope the CEC is prepared to seriously consider that. Secondly, the CEC Statement connects many important economic issues worthy of separate debate and discussion in the GMB. It supports the GMB policy on public ownership, but it is essentially silent on the prospect of job creation in the new green sustainable industries. Neither is it climate fundamentalism to say to the British Government you are obliged to uphold and not break our international climate commitments. And neither should we place our trust in the UK or global energy market to take the decisive and urgent action that we need for a genuine, just transition.

So, Congress, with those important qualifications, I ask you to support the statement.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chris, thank you. North East, Yorkshire & Humber?

ANDY PERKINS (North East, Yorkshire and Humber): I am speaking from the North

East, Yorkshire and Humber Region, a region built by the hands of working people and now staring down the barrel of another industrial transition. We welcome the CEC Statement. It recognised what too many Governments haven't, that neo-liberalism has failed us, that globalisation as we knew it is over, and that if we want resilience, we must take back responsibility for the industries that make life possible, from energy to steel to public utilities.

But here is the truth from our patch. We have had heard the talk before. What matters now is delivery. That must be worker led, regionally routed and urgently resourced. Let me be blunt, on energy security we do not want more strategy documents, we want shovel-ready jobs in infrastructure projects, including across the offshore wind sector, not offshore contracts. If Britain's future energy mix still relies on gas then we want guarantees that British workers will be the ones producing it, transporting it and building the infrastructure around it.

When it comes to steel, it was essential to intervene and nationalise, we agree, but let's get on with it. This isn't theory. This is the last blast furnace in Britain. Lose that and we lose the base of our industrial strategy.

And while we are at it, let's stop pretending market incentives alone will fix a supply change that has been gutted by decades of neglect. The call for a UCAS-style clearing house is a good one, but in our region, we need real investment now, in college provision, in retaining funds, in decent wages that mean young people can afford to train and live. It is about more than qualifications. It is about dignity, direction and a union presence in every classroom and training centre.

And finally, none of this counts without delivery. Workers Power the Future is a good start but let's be honest, if the strategy does not empower rank and file workers to actually lead it, we will be back in five's time with another bold document and the same broken promises.

In the North East Yorkshire & Humber Region we have created a panel to put workers who are actually on the tools front and centre in the debate. I would urge you all to join us at Tuesday lunchtime to hear from members at our fringe meeting and find out how you can get involved. If the transition does not deliver good union jobs, it is not our transition. If national resilience does not come with local control, it will not work, and if the strategy is not grounded in our lived experience, then it is not worth the paper it is printed on. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Andy. Midlands Region? Can the movers and seconds of Motions 206, 209, 2010, 2011, and 2015 come down the front ready for the next section?

MILES SHORT (Midlands): Good afternoon. Two years ago I stood on this very platform and begged every one of you to support the steelworks for it not to shut. Gary and Barbara backed this policy, and so I am thanking you all today because the steelworks is open, there are jobs, they are recruiting 128 people with another 200 people to be taken on in three months' time. These are not agency people. These are proper jobs that pay tax, have holidays and pensions. I would like to thank you all. If you are wondering what shirt I have got on, that is the steelworks, that there. (*Applause*)

And the team wore these shirts for a game because the football team backed the steel workers. The chairman of the football team is a woman and she backed the football team, she sponsored it, she paid for everything, she got it out of debt and she has been brilliant. The town is buzzing, I mean really buzzing. You go in the pubs, it is fantastic, and I have got all you in here, whether you just looked at the newspaper and said, “That’s not bloody right”, I have got all you in here, and these people here as well that deserve a big pat on the back for this because it saved 3,000 jobs plus at least another 5,000 people in the areas, and that is what you have got to be thankful for. Thank very much, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Miles, and for the demonstration of the t-shirt. Thank you. London Region?

CLIVE RONEY (London): Speaking in support of the Statement on the Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure. The first thing I have got to say is that is fantastic, what we just heard there, that is absolutely phenomenal. So, my hat goes off to everybody as well for that fantastic campaign. It shows what the GMB can do when we work together and we stand for the people in this country. Well done! (*Applause*)

Our region welcomes the Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure Statement, and in particular the call for the nationalisation of our essential services. Having said this, it is important to note that we do not believe that the report goes far enough to pull together our policy on the water industry in particular, challenging exorbitant CEO bonuses and shareholder dividends, rewarding them despite failing and underperforming water companies. We also believe that the report should mention

Congress policy calling for better enforcement and regulation and one that is fit for purpose so we do not continually enable unscrupulous private enterprises to continue stripping our valuable infrastructure! (*Applause*) Despite these concerns, the report is a positive one and London Region are happy to support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cliff. I think as one of the delegates said, all the motions relating to this statement have been withdrawn, so I will put the statement to Congress. All those in favour of the SEC's Special Report on Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure, please show. Anyone against? That is carried unanimously.

*The CEC's Special Report on Industrial Strategy and Infrastructure was **CARRIED**.*

### **Industrial & Economic Policy: Infrastructure**

THE PRESIDENT: We will continue with motions under Industrial & Economic policy: Infrastructure. Can I have the mover of Motion 206, please.

### **FUSION POWER PLANT**

#### **MOTION 206**

#### **206. FUSION POWER PLANT**

This Congress asks GMB to actively engage with the development of the STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) project in North Nottinghamshire, building UK's first prototype Fusion Power Plant. The potential for the construction phase of the project will bring huge (6,000 jobs) employment opportunities.

### **Z63 GMB NOTTINGHAM TEC BRANCH**

## MIDLANDS REGION

*(Carried)*

MILES SHORT (Midlands): Supporting Motion 206. I call upon the Government to support nuclear and other energies because we need this in the country. It also provides good jobs, training for young people, and it is a good industry to work in, it is a safe industry. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Secunder?

IAN PREECE (Midlands): From the sunny Midlands. President, Congress, I am proud to second this motion in full support of the development of the first UK prototype fusion power plant in the north of Nottinghamshire, the STEP project. This is not just about science or innovation, although it is cutting edge and world leading, it is about people, about opportunity and about jobs. We are talking about 6,000 good-quality jobs during the construction phase alone. Thousands of families with renewed financial security, in a region renewed for hope. As somebody who works every day in communities striving to improve lives, I know exactly what impact this scale of investment will do for that area. It means more opportunities for young people, reskilling older workers and supply chain opportunities for local business. This is a once-in-a-generation chance for GMB to be at the heart of a green industry revolution, shaping jobs that not only are sustainable for the planet but sustainable for our community too. Let's not just welcome STEP, let's lead it, let's ensure GMB are right there in the middle representing, negotiating and protecting workers from day one. Thank you. *(Applause)*

## **HYDROGEN CELL INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **MOTION 209**

#### **209. HYDROGEN CELL INFRASTRUCTURE**

This Congress is often spoken to about the green economy and the importance of new energy technology. There is now in the UK, several hydrogen initiatives coming to fruition which could transform our energy and motor industry beyond recognition. Currently there is a distinct lack of refuelling stations available in the UK compared to some of our European competitors. We are asking the CEC to lobby the government to set about the extra stations and refuelling system throughout the UK as it is sadly lacking at this present moment. I urge.

#### **R36 ROCESTER JCB GENERAL BRANCH**

#### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Ian. Mover of 209?

ROB BROWN (Midlands): From the marvellous Midlands Region, speaking on the motion Hydrogen Cell Infrastructure. Hydrogen is set to be a mainstream fuel for heating, power generation, transport and chemical manufacturing. Regulators need to start planning for its adoption now. Hydrogen can be transported in bulk as a gas or liquid or combined with a carrier for safe transportation. Hydrogen is going to be one of the major fuels of the future. It is well-known hydrogen will help tackle climate change by meeting global targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. As such a momentous shift from a carbon economy to a hydrogen economy will be needed within the next 10 years. to meet the emissions reduction targets being proposed by

governments and industry. The shift will happen because hydrogen is an extremely flexible energy that can meet any of society's needs, including replacing carbon-based fuels with hydrogen-based ones for your heating, power generation and transport, as well as to produce chemicals. Its flexibility lies in an ability to be generated, stored and transported in bulk as a gas or liquid, or combined with carriers for safe transportation. Hydrogen can also be converted to net-zero carbon-based liquid fuels such as e-diesel and e-kerosene.

Today there are three types of manufactured hydrogen. There is grey hydrogen which is produced by the steam reforming of natural gas where the byproduct of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. Blue hydrogen is the carbon dioxide bi-product. This is captured and utilised or stored in depleted gas fields, and generally that is offshore. Green hydrogen is produced using power from nuclear or renewable sources in an electrolysis plant to split clean water into hydrogen and oxygen or using advanced conversion methods.

Once hydrogen is produced it can be transported to a hydrogen gas or as a chemical such as ammonia. In a further measure of its flexibility, hydrogen can be generated on site next to your energy supplier, such as nuclear power stations, offshore windfarms or solar plants. Alternatively, it can be generated at each service station for transport, or in a catchment area with a cluster of hydrogen fuelling stations for lorries, trucks and trains.

Another key development is the potential production of green liquid fuels from hydrogen. This requires green hydrogen being reacted with carbon dioxide captured from biomass plants or through direct air capture to extract the carbon dioxide.

The technology also exists for the production, transport and storage of hydrogen, as well as production of liquid fuels, and the industry is almost ready to go. Some refinement work is needed to scale up production from electrolysis to repurpose existing gas transmissions.

Until such policies and regulations are in place development work on products cannot progress much further. Many energy-related organisations are spending their own funds on development to be product ready and to safeguard their future operations. However, investment is limited in the current uncertain regulatory environment.

THE CO-CHAIR: Wind up now Robert, please.

ROB BROWN: Some Governments have provided funds to kickstart demonstration projects while they finalise their hydrogen strategies, policies and regs ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Robert, we are running late, can you please wind up now.

ROB BROWN: -- including the Netherlands and the UK. The shift to hydrogen must be soon. If not the global 2050 net zero targets for carbon dioxide emissions will be more hot air. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Secunder?

KIEFER ALLEN (Midlands): First-time speaker. (*Applause*). I am seconding Motion 209. We must embrace the new energy of the future and become a new leader for the rest of the world to aspire to. Support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

## **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

### **MOTION 210**

#### **210. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

The election of a new Mayor for the Humberside Region provides big opportunities for workers. With millions of government investment in carbon capture, quality training and good unionised jobs should flow into Humberside. Yet the evidence from other green transition infrastructure projects is that too many of the associated jobs and materials are outsourced around the world. Where major government spending in subsidising green transition projects, it must lead to quality training and good jobs. This is particularly vital in our industrial heartlands that have suffered from the closure of traditional industries. A commitment to delivering local apprenticeships, retraining and to signing trade union recognition agreements should be a component of every green transition contract put out to tender.

Congress Resolves

- To ask the new Mayor of Humberside to use their influence and procurement opportunities to drive the delivery of good unionised jobs across the region.
- To ask the Secretary of State for Energy to build trade union recognition agreements into department procurement processes.
- To campaign for all projects/new builds to have a 15 per cent employment level of apprentices.

## **Z70 BRANCH**

### **NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION**

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Mover of Motion 211? Sorry, that is incorrect. Motion 210. I apologise for that.

JAMES TATE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, Chair, standing to move Motion 210, Green Infrastructure Projects on behalf of the powerful and passionate North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region. I know we are a long way down south but I am sure you will all have clocked that Tyneside is not in Humberside, so why am I up here from the North East speaking about the new Mayor on the East Coast 150 miles south of my home?

Well, I am here because there are many lessons to be learned about the destruction of our industrial heartlands from the North East, and Humberside deserves better than the systematic stripping of jobs that have devastated our communities for years. I am born and bred in the industrial north, growing up near Ashington, a place once known as the largest mining village in the world, and I have seen and felt the reality of what happens to communities that get left behind.

Unfortunately, Humberside now has a Reform Mayor, a Mayor who stands for working people. Well, it is our job to put his money where his mouth is. If he wants to deliver for the region and to make the most of the opportunities that the green transition provides, then he needs to make sure our investment money gets back into the workers'

pockets, through solid trade union agreements, so we can continue to fight to make work better and fairer for all, and quality apprenticeship programmes, ensuring opportunities for young workers.

Congress, it is vital that we drive this agenda everywhere where investment is driving change. The green transition must be a worker-led transition. Let's learn from the devastation of the 1980s when all over the UK Thatcher destroyed communities like mine. Let's build a fairer future. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, James. Secunder?

AITHON COOPER (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Hello. Good afternoon, President, Congress, I am from Doncaster Council, and from the Yorkshire part, the proud part of being the big North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. *(Applause)* The original slogan. There we go. First-time Congress attendee and first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Doncaster is part of the old industrial heartlands that today feels left behind. Where our pits once stood is now swathes of corporate warehouses for the likes of Amazon and fast-fashion companies. Over a generation we have moved backwards in local working-class jobs. Where Donny residents used to earn good money in skilled unionised jobs, they are now forced to work for exploitative companies that pay a pittance and offer appalling terms and conditions. So, where the Government is investing, it is vital the rewards are felt by the local community. That means using local workers, using UK-made materials and investing in apprenticeships and training to

build a long-term local legacy, and doing it all within trade union recognition agreements. Only this can serve the needs of today and tomorrow of communities. And make no mistake, if we do not, the impact will be felt for years. Just look at Donny, where last month Reform stormed in the election taking 37 of our council seats. That should be a wake-up call to politicians of all colours. Let your communities down and they will punish you at the ballot box. So, Congress, please support this motion, make sure that investment in infrastructure means investments in our communities. I second.

*(Applause)*

## **NATIONAL UK SHIPBUILDING STABILITY STRATEGY**

### **MOTION 211**

#### **211. NATIONAL UK SHIPBUILDING STABILITY STRATEGY**

This Congress recognises the vital importance of shipbuilding to the UK, national security, and industrial capability. For too long, the UK's shipbuilding industry has suffered from cycles of boom and bust, leading to the erosion of skills, the closure of yards, and the loss of strategic manufacturing capacity.

The National Shipbuilding Strategy, launched by the then conservative government in 2017, was meant to provide long-term, sustainable growth for the sector. However, the industry's continued instability highlights the need for more immediate and comprehensive action to ensure that the strategy is fully implemented, with long-term funding and a clear vision for future procurement.

This conference therefore calls on the UK Government in collaboration with the GMB to:

- 1 Fully implement the National Shipbuilding Strategy with a clear and defined pathway for consistent investment in the sector.
- 2 Ensure sustained funding for shipbuilding, including support for shipyards, suppliers, and the workforce, to prevent the boom-and-bust cycles that have plagued the industry for decades.

3 Commit to a long-term shipbuilding programme, which includes the procurement of both military and civilian vessels, in order to provide stability and a clear pipeline of work for UK shipyards, thereby preserving skilled jobs and enhancing the UK's strategic industrial capacity.

4 Support workers in the shipbuilding sector by ensuring decent pay, training, and long-term job security, with a focus on apprenticeships and skills development for future generations of shipbuilders.

5 Prioritise UK-built vessels for both public sector and defence needs, ensuring that the UK's shipbuilding capabilities remain at the forefront of technological innovation and national security.

This conference believes that by implementing these measures, the UK Government can stabilise the shipbuilding industry, create sustainable jobs across the whole sector, and ensure that the UK remains a global leader in shipbuilding for decades to come.

## **EXETER & NORTH DEVON E35 BRANCH**

### **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

RYAN WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): President, Congress, moving Motion 211 on a National UK Shipbuilding Stability Strategy. Colleagues, shipbuilding is not just an industry, it is the backbone of our coastal communities, a pillar of our national security and a source of pride for generations of skilled workers, yet for too long we have watched as our shipyards have endured the endless cycle of boom and bust. We have seen the heartbreak of closures, the loss of irreplaceable skills and the erosion of our industrial strength. Enough is it enough. The National Shipbuilding Strategy launched in 2017 promised a new dawn, but the reality is the industry still faces uncertainty. The strategy needs teeth and real sustained investment, not just warm words.

In 2024, shipbuilding contributed £2.7 billion to our economy and jobs in the sector have grown even as wider manufacturing has struggled, but this progress is fragile. Without a clear long-term plan we risk slipping backwards. Congress, this motion calls for action. We demand the Government fully implement the National Shipbuilding Strategy with a clear pathway for consistent investment. We need sustained funding, not just for the big yards, for the suppliers and skilled workforce that keep the industry alive. We need a long-term programme for both military and civilian vessels, giving our shipyards a reliable pipeline of work and our communities hope for the future. Let's be clear, this is about more than economics. It is about our national security. In a world where global tensions are rising we cannot afford to lose our ability to build and maintain the ships that protect our shores. It is about good unionised jobs with decent pay, apprenticeships and real prospects for the next generation. It is about making sure that UK-built ships set sail under the UK flag, supporting our economy and our people.

Congress, let's send a message, we will not stand by while our shipbuilding heritage is dismantled piece by piece. Let's fight for a stable, thriving and world-leading shipbuilding industry. I urge you, support this motion and let us build a better future together. I move.

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ryan. Secunder?

EMMA CAUSER (Wales & South West): Congress, seconding Motion 211. Colleagues, I am proud to speak in support of this vital motion, a motion that goes to the very heart of our nation's industrial soul, the future UK shipbuilding. For

generations, shipbuilding has been more than just a trade in this country. It has been a symbol of our strength, our innovation and our shared pride. From the Clyde to the Tyne, from Barrow to Belfast and from Appledore to Devonport, we built the ships that built an empire, defending our shores and connecting us to the world. But Congress, we know the truth that that proud legacy has been allowed to wither. Decades of short-term thinking, of political indifference and the curse of boom and bust have hollowed out this great industry. We have seen yards close, we have seen communities devastated and we have seen generations of skilled workers cast aside, their potential wasted, their crafts forgotten. The National Shipbuilding Strategy launched in 2017 promised a turning point and while it spoke the right language, Congress, the delivery has been patchy at best. The instability remained, the vision has been blurred, and the long-term investment this industry so desperately needs has yet to be secured. That must change and it must change now. This motion calls on the UK Government to do what it should have done from the start: work with GMB and the industry to implement a real, lasting, properly funded strategy that restores shipbuilding to its rightful place in our economy and our national security. We demand a clear and consistent investment plan, not just lofty promises, an end to the destructive cycle of peak and trough, a procurement pipeline that includes not just military vessels but civilian ones too - ferries, coastguard ships, research vessels. All built here in UK yards by UK workers. Decent pay, secure jobs and the skills programme to inspire a new generation of shipbuilders. And, colleagues, a proud commitment that public money will be spent on British built ships, strengthening our industrial base and our national resilience.

THE CO-CHAIR: Can you wind up now please, Emma?

EMMA CAUSER: Congress, this isn't just about steel and rivets. It is about the people who make our nation work - the welders, the designers and the apprentices. It is about giving our communities pride and purpose, and it is about ensuring that the UK never again has to rely on foreign yards for our defence and our future. Let us rebuild not only the slips but the hope, the craft, the jobs and the security that come with them. Let us back this motion and build a shipbuilding legacy our children can be proud of. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you. Mover of 215, please?

## **LET'S BUILD DRONES IN BRITAIN**

### **MOTION 215**

#### **215. LET'S BUILD DRONES IN BRITAIN**

This Congress notes that our union is proud of our members in manufacturing and committed to ensuring the new Labour Government invests to support their jobs and communities. That defence manufacturing makes up a vital part of UK manufacturing, supporting tens of thousands of jobs across the supply chain in every UK region and nation. That drone technology is an increasingly important strategic technology for the UK and its allies.

This is true in defence as well as civilian applications such as construction, agriculture and flood management.

A recent report commissioned by GMB Midlands Region found that the establishment of a UK drone manufacturing hub could be worth £40 billion to the UK economy, as well as lead to the creation of tens of thousands of well-paid manufacturing jobs.

That the UK is at a disadvantage in lacking a large-scale domestic drone manufacturing sector and is heavily reliant on contracting and purchasing drone technology from abroad. Congress resolves to support Labour Members of Parliament, urging investment in the UK's drone sector. To urge the Labour Government to act now to make sure that British industry remains relevant in the fast-moving sector.

## **X20 MIDLANDS APEX GENERAL BRANCH**

### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

NICOLA HOWELL (Midlands): Moving Motion 215, Let's Build Drones in Britain. Our union proud of our members in manufacturing and it is ensuring this Labour Government invests to support their jobs and communities. Defence manufacturing makes up a vital part of UK jobs, supporting tens of thousands of jobs across the supply chain and drone technology is an increasingly important strategic technology for the UK and its allies. This is as true in defence as it is in civilian applications, such as construction, agriculture and flooding. Drones have become indispensable in civil engineering, using them throughout design and build projects, from video reference at initial concept stage into 3D virtual reality models prior to construction. During construction stage they are used to measure and monitor sites, to track progress and - provide quality assurance for the final as built documentation. Our structures teams can visually survey bridges over waterways. In the old days they would have to do it from a boat at a distance, with health and safety being an issue. Drones can get up real close to detect cracking or corrosion. Utility companies such as Severn Trent use them

with cage protectors to go through large sewers or tunnels to assess condition, preventing harm to the operatives and inspectors in these confined spaces. Loss adjusters use them to assess damaged buildings, minimise the exposure of workers to dangerous conditions.

A further risk reduction example can be seen in Kirton-in-Lindsey in Lincolnshire. The fire brigade have procured a large drone to assist in heat seeking and finding locations of people inside a burning building. It is a great piece of kit that can be also used by the police in searching large bodies of water for missing people in flood situations.

Drones are revolutionising civil engineering, emergency services and many other civilian activities, providing safe and efficient surveying. A recent report commissioned by the GMB Midlands Region found that establishing a drone manufacturing hub could be worth £40 billion to the UK economy and create tens of thousands of well-paid jobs. The UK is at a disadvantage in lacking large drone manufacturing and is heavily reliant on purchasing this vital equipment from abroad. Let's support the Labour MPs urging investment in the UK. I move this motion to urge the Labour Government to make sure British industry remains relevant in this fast-moving sector. Let's build British, not procure poor quality. I move. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Nicola. Seconder, please?

IAN PREECE (Midlands): Hello again. President, Congress, we stand at a crossroads, one where Britain must choose to lead not follow. Drone technology is no longer futuristic, it is vital: in defence, disaster response, agriculture and much more. Drones

are saving lives and reshaping industries, and yet we are importing the future when we should be building it. This motion is not just about drones. It is about British pride, British jobs and British potential. A drone manufacturing hub could bring in £40 billion to our economy and secure tens of thousands of skilled unionised jobs in every corner of this country. We have the talent, we have the drive, all we need now is the political will. Let's stop outsourcing opportunities and start investing in our own. I back this motion. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ian. Anyone like to speak against the motions? No. I will call Joe Olive, the CEC speaker, and may I ask that movers and seconders of Emergency Motion 3 from London come to the front, please?

JOE OLIVE (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motion 211. The CEC supports with qualification Motion 211, the National UK Shipbuilding Stability Strategy. This is a welcome and timely reminder to Congress of the importance of the UK shipbuilding industry and the need for the development and implementation of strategic planning placed at the very heart of Government. At the core of this project is prioritising our own industrial capacity and awarding of contracts to UK shipyards and manufacturers.

However, the qualification is that the union would wish to go beyond the terms of the 2017 review in order to have a leading influence in the current Defence Review under Labour. They should look to redress the moth-balling of the UK's amphibious landing ships to increase the capacity and size of the naval establishment, to expand the numerical strength of the naval establishment, which currently stands at only 32,000

personnel and is inadequate to our military commitments. Further, commissioning of support, survey, customs and coastguard vessels would also act to fill order books in between major refits, as well as greatly assisting with the safeguarding of our shores. This is a moment of enormous opportunity for our shipyards and GMB needs to be ready to grasp it and push for the long-term strategic planning to govern and develop a national and world-class industry. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Joe. Colleagues the CEC are supporting Motions 206, 209, 210 and 215. And Wales & South West support the qualification on Motion 211. Thank you. We will now go to the vote. All those in favour of 206, please show. Any against? All those in support of Motion 209, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 210, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 211, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 215, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 206 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 209 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 210 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 215 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could the mover and seconder of Emergency Motion 3 now come to the rostrum and the movers and seconders of 260, 263 and 266 come down to the front? Congress, this is Emergency Motion 3 from London Region on the Collapse of Thames Water.

## **EMERGENCY MOTION 3**

### **COLLAPSE OF THAMES WATER**

#### **Emergency Motion 3 - Collapse of Thames Water**

UKs biggest water company Thames Water has been struggling with over £20bn of debt and a creaking infrastructure. Last month, MPs were told that at one point this year it had about five weeks' worth of cash left before going bust. In May, OFWAT fined them with penalties totalling nearly £123 million asking them not to put this onto the 16 million customers who already faced increases in their bills of at least £200. Despite our protests, we saw Thames Water receiving a £3billion emergency bailout loan from creditors lead by controversial US hedge fund Elliott Management and Silver Point and still the bosses and CEO got huge bonuses. We cannot continue to reward failure. In April, US private equity firm KKR was chosen as the preferred (and only) bidder offering £4billion to "take over" Thames Water and rescue it from the brink of nationalisation. By 3 June KKR pulled out of the deal leaving a potential collapse of Thames Water and 8,000 jobs. We cannot wait for another private equity company to wade in. GMB has learnt from bitter history that these companies and the multi-millionaire elite that run them are desperate to portray themselves as growers of jobs, of innovation and of being vital to the well-being of the economy but the reality is that they would asset strip Thames Water. The Private Sector has failed Thames Water and GMB call on the Government to take urgent special measures now to prevent their collapse. We need to protect the customers; the environment and we need to guarantee that jobs are not lost. Morale has been low for hundreds of our members who have been struggling to cope with fixing leaks and upgrading the decaying infrastructure whilst facing abuse and criticism from the public. They need immediate solid assurances about what's going to happen to their jobs, pay, and pensions. The Water Sector and infrastructure needs stronger regulation, and the independent Water Commission set up in 2024 confirmed that a fundamental reset was needed when they published their interim findings on 3 June. GMB

must step up our campaign for the Government to set up a new regulatory body to oversee the water companies as the current one is not fit for purpose. Should the Government be forced to take on a supervised administration, we urge our Union to ensure our members' jobs, pay and pensions are protected.

**BRANCH: E15 Thames General Branch**

**REGION: GMB London**

*(Carried)*

CLIFF RONEY (London): Congress, President, brothers, sisters, moving Emergency Motion 3, the Collapse of Thames Water. As you can see I am dressed as a thief in a swag's outfit. Where's my bag? There it is. Hold tight. Just so there is no confusion. There we go.

The UK's biggest water company, Thames Water, has been struggling with over £20 billion worth of debt and creaking infrastructure. Last month, MPs were told that at one point they had five weeks' worth of cash left before they went completely bust. In May, Ofwat fined them penalties totalling nearly £123 million asking them not to take it out on the 16 million customers who already face infrastructure bill increases of at least £200 over four years. Despite our protests, we saw Thames Water receiving £3 billion in emergency bail-out loans from creditors led by controversial US hedge fund Elliott Management and Silverpoint. At this point, bosses and CEOs were still getting bonuses, until at long last the Invisible Man Steve Reed stepped in and announced that failure would no longer be rewarded, by banning bonuses. In April, private equity firm KKR were chosen as the preferred bidder, offering £4 billion to take over Thames Water and rescue it from the brink of special measures. By 3rd June 2025, they had

pulled out of the deal, leaving the potential collapse of Thames Water and uncertainty for 8,000 jobs. We cannot wait for another private equity company to wade in. The GMB has learnt from bitter history that these companies and the multimillionaire elite who run them are desperate to portray themselves as growers of jobs and innovation, vital to the well-being of the economy, but in reality they are - thieves! (*Cries of "Thieves"!*) Thank you. We need to protect our customers as well as the environment and we need to guarantee that jobs are not lost. Morale has been low for hundreds and hundreds of our members. They have been struggling to cope with fixing leaks and upgrading decaying infrastructure whilst facing abuse and criticism from the public. They need immediate assurances that that is not going to happen and they are going to safeguard their jobs, their terms and conditions and most of all their pensions.

The water sector and the infrastructure need stronger regulation and the independent Water Commission set up in 2024 confirmed that a fundamental re-set was needed and they published their interim findings on 3rd June. Sir Adrian Montague (*Ssss!*) said he may have misspoken during an Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee session with MPs, when he said creditors insisted on the management retention plan that would put their bosses and make them receive upward of 50% in bonuses. That has now been banned, but the CEE Chris Weston is still going to receive £1 million without the bonuses. Thieves! (*Applause*) Keir, it is time to stop kicking the can down the road, do your job and re-nationalise the water industry. (*Applause*) Thirty-five years of privatisation has decimated the water industry, billions of pounds have been taken out by fat cat owners, huge payments and bonuses to CEOs. Congress, please get behind this motion to stop the thieves! Congress, I move. Thieves! Thieves! Thieves! (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Cliff. Congress, the CEC are supporting this motion. *(Applause)* All those in favour? Sorry, it has to be formally seconded, is that correct? *(Formally seconded)* Thank you. The CEC are supporting this motion. All those in favour, please show. Any against? *(Cries of “Thieves!”)* Nobody dare. That is carried.

*Emergency Motion 3 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Could the mover of Motion 260 now come to the rostrum?

## **WASTEFUL WATER REGULATIONS**

### **MOTION 260**

#### **260. WASTEFUL WATER REGULATIONS**

This Congress affirms that in-house public services are proven to deliver higher quality, more cost-effective service and performance, and in the case of Scottish Water, award winning services; condemns the increasing reliance on the private sector in vital public services in Scotland, such as Scottish Water, which is allowing private interests to embed themselves and profit from a core human need.

Congress notes that regulation of the water industry is required to ensure drinking water is safe and accessible, and that wastewater is dealt with responsibly to protect human life, environmental health and our waterways; but believes that excessive regulatory demands from the Water Industry Commission Scotland (WICS), Drinking Water Quality Regulator and Scottish Environment Protection Agency has created a blame culture within Scottish Water where workers – not management – are held to account for organisational failures; and further believes this

motivates management to place excessive responsibilities and pressures on the performance of the workforce affecting health and morale.

Congress believes that an excessive number of regulatory bodies, overbearing Board governance and a lack of transparency amongst both have created a top-heavy system of patronage and a culture of elitism where undisclosed contracts and bonuses are given to executives while the pay of Scottish Water workers lags far behind the private sector leading to the increased threat of industrial action; notes that the Scottish Government's guidance on executive pay in its Public Sector Pay Strategy has been repeatedly broken; notes Scottish Water's Chief Executive is Scotland's highest paid quango chief with a total salary package of £483,000 – including £87,000 of bonuses; and believes that the planned 10% increase in Scottish water charges forced onto households in 2025 could be mitigated if this culture was confronted. Whilst recognising GMB Scotland's right to determine its own policy with regards to the Scottish Parliament, congress supports its calls for the Scottish Government to:

- Include and implement strict conditions around public sector executive pay and bonuses through its Public Sector Pay Strategy – extending this to the quangos, commissions and regulatory bodies.
- Meaningfully consult trade unions on future Public Sector Pay Strategies to deliver value for frontline workers and avoid industrial action.
- Conduct a full review of all regulatory bodies in relation to Scottish Water with an aim to consolidate responsibilities and reduce costs.

## **L11 SCOTTISH WATER BRANCH**

### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

THE PRESIDENT: Just before you take to the rostrum, may I make an

announcement that Motions 130, 131, 132, 133 and Composite 7 will move to tomorrow's agenda. Apologies if you were expecting to speak this afternoon. You have a little bit more time to practise and make sure your speeches keep to time. They will be tomorrow.

ANDY THOMPSON (GMB Scotland): Moving Motion 260 - Wasteful Water Regulations. I would just point out before I start following my colleague in the privatised sector, I am going to speak about some of the challenges in the public sector in Scotland. In Scotland there are three water regulators, where we have a public service, the Water Industry Commission, SEPA for the environment and the Water Quality Regulator. Wasteful water regulations are those that are not delivered, cost a fortune for overpaid boffins to manage and do not actually achieve compliance with the regulations set out. The difference between how management and workers are treated when things go wrong is stark. The Water Industry Commission in Scotland is a disgrace. Embarrassingly, it was discredited for excessive, lavish and unapproved expenses spending. After an inquiry the Commissioner was removed from office. However, he left with a handsome financial package that allegedly breached government guidelines. You could be forgiven for thinking it was hush money. We would say it is corruption.

SEPA's job is to protect the environment. Well, sometimes they do. In England you are aware of the pollution because you monitor it. In Scotland we have only just started monitoring it so we do not know how bad the pollution actually is. SEPA was virtually paralysed a few years ago after its IT system was hacked and they refused to pay a

ransom, resulting in a data loss that led to a complete business shutdown. We would say that is incompetence.

The Water Quality Regulator's job is to ensure water quality supports public health. Increasingly higher standards are imposed with no thought of the extreme demands imposed on our members. Corners are cut to achieve desired results.

Water bosses and regulators are highly paid and unaccountable. There is no consultation with us about our members' concerns and how their actions affect us at work or our wider lives. It is a cosy relationship where academics and a high-paid elite skilfully collude to protect themselves from criticism, but they have no conscience about how the accountability is transferred to public sector workers. It is becoming clear the answer to management failures is to blame workers as scapegoats and allow manager exit strategies to accommodate their incompetence.

What does it mean for GMB reps and members in Scotland? All regulation failures start an inquiry. Everyone is involved. It triggers panic and fear, disciplinary procedures, misconduct allegations, with the potential for dismissal. A victimisation culture develops. Management abuse power and authority to protect themselves. Responsibility and blame is put on workers that are doing everything in their power to do their jobs under enormous pressure. The system is designed to protect and preserve management job security and careers and escape responsibility, and punish workers so that they can be reported back as the actions taken to address regulator concerns.

The motion calls for actions. End the Scottish Government pay strategy discriminating one public sector worker against another and allow fair pay. Allow full union inclusion at every consultation stage on all regulation matters that affect pay, job security, work-life balance and the future of our beloved public service. If you want regulatory efficiencies, our members can tell you how to achieve it. Create a multi-functional regulator that reduces senior management jobs and excessive pay by two-thirds and ensures directors and chief executives are responsible for the delivery of legal duties and if they do not, they receive the consequences applied to workers: the sack.

Congress, we are being charged for services by these alleged industry experts. They argue that we need to pay them the best or they will move on. The truth is when management incompetence fails you, the regulators fine the water company and you pay the bill for all their incompetence twice. It is time government, which is ultimately the main regulator, concentrated on cutting preposterous costs at the high end, holding management to account and to stop allowing the victimisation of workers for wasteful regulation failures. Prosecute the bosses, protect the workers! Congress, please support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Secunder?

DAVID FERGUSON (GMB Scotland): Seconding Motion 260. I love these islands and it saddens me that we have to fight for basic necessities like clean water. Coming from Scotland where it rains 365 days of the year, you would think that managing a water board would be the easiest thing in the world, but it seems not. We do not want

to see the decline of Scottish Water because they employ around 4,500 people from John O’Groats down to Gretna, and that is a lot of families that depend on it. Mismanagement brings lower wages, weaker employment rights and more demanding working conditions. There is already a culture that has crept in where workers are blamed for any issues in the water quality or services while senior management, the real slopey-shoulder act, were receiving large bonuses, all the while workers fight for cost-of-living pay rises. The public purse has also been wasted with top brass jetting around the world to lavish events as far away as New Zealand and attending Harvard University for training while broken services and poor water quality attracts heavy fines from regulators.

It is hard for us in Scotland to imagine having to be careful with how much water we use when it rains every day, but now we hear they are putting water meters in houses in Dundee purely to see how much water we use and not for billing. Yeah right! And let’s not forget the quality of this water is vital to our whisky industry. This is what keeps us going through the long cold winter months where we dream about global warming. We also see modernisation projects being taken off the skilled workforce and handed to private contractors to build, while the extortionate bill for this and the regulator’s fines are all being passed on to the customer.

If Scottish Water continues to have these oversight issues, the workforce, and the public, will pay the price ultimately. So, I ask you to pass this motion so our team can get to work fixing this. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Mover of Motion 363, please?

## **JUST TRANSITION**

### **MOTION 263**

#### **263. JUST TRANSITION**

This Congress notes that the idea of a just transition was one thought up and developed by sister trade unions in Canada, to mean the process of ensuring that workers displaced from workplaces due to the transition away from fossil fuels and environment harmful professions were provided with the training needed to help them move from one role to another without being out of pocket, enabling them to continue with a career path which maintained them in employment with the same or better standard of living, importantly leaving nobody behind.

This was passed into the policy of the UN's International Labour Organisation and later written into the introduction to the 2015 Paris accord. However, since then there have been moves made by the employer's organisations and some nation states with appalling human rights records to change the meaning of "Just Transition" to mean a change of any kind which may only be just for an employer or country leaving the rest to wither on the vine.

The GMB along with other unions has shown at Ratcliffe-on-Soar that with time and planning, it is possible to realise a Just Transition along the lines of that original meaning, where no worker was left behind when the last coal fired power station closed.

This motion calls on the GMB to work with other unions around the world to remind the United Nations that a Just Transition is one that supports the workers into new professions, where possible preserving skilled individuals in the economy to assist in the transition to a more sustainable way of life. It should not be used to include a change that only benefits an employer, industry or nation state such as their claim for compensation for their losses because they can no longer continue to pollute while creating a product such as fossil fuels.

A “Just Transition” is a level of protection for the workers of the world and for economies to preserve transferable skills, leaving nobody behind or out of pocket and they need reminding of that fact.

## **M23 GMB UNITE BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

JAMIE WALKER (London): I am moving 263, Just Transition. When we talk about climate change, we talk about targets, emissions by 2030, net zero by 2050, but what often gets left behind is the people, as we heard earlier. Workers, communities, skills and futures. A just transition should not just be a marketing slogan; it is a promise. It is a promise that we do not just swap one form of exploitation for another. That we do not leave working people behind in the rush to go green. That progress does not become just another excuse for job losses, run-down communities and skill sets that end up tossed on the scrapheap.

The idea of a just transition started with trade unions, our movement, and it meant something. It meant that as industries change, we plan for that change, we invest in people, not just the technology. We retrain, we, re-skill, we reinvest so that a cleaner future also means a fairer one. Businesses have tried to turn the just transition into something that suits them; one where not only companies get compensation, one where it is just as long as it doesn't disrupt profit. That is not just transition, that is just business as usual dressed up in green, to be honest.

We have shown it can be done differently in the trade union movement. When the last

coal-fired station at Radcliffe-on-Soar shut down, no workers were left behind. Why was that? Because there was time, there was planning, there was negotiation and, above all, there was us. There was a commitment that change would include the people doing the work, not just those cashing the cheques and swapping over to something different.

This motion calls on the GMB to help put the original definition of a just transition back to where it belongs: at the heart of international labour standards. That means working with other unions across the world, reminding the Government, the policymakers, the UN what “just” really means and making sure that climate justice includes economic justice. It is worthwhile recognising that just transition is not just of those in the traditional heavy industries, as pointed out by the CEC’s qualification. Automation in the name of just transition can apply across many sector that the GMB represents in and we can all be affected by this, and we can positively affect it if we are involved in the process.

Congress, let’s not let transition become a euphemism for “managed decline”. We cannot let green growth be used against our members’ livelihoods to divide us, setting sector against sector and union against union. We are not opposed to change, we are not clinging to the past, but we are demanding a say in the future - in our future. It is a guarantee that no worker, no industry and no community gets left behind. So please, Congress, support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie. Seconder? *(Formally seconded)* Thank you, that helps. Mover of Motion 266?

**CAMPAIGN TO LOBBY WESTMINSTER GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT  
A FLOOD RELIEF SOCIAL FUND**

**MOTION 266**

**266. CAMPAIGN TO LOBBY WESTMINSTER GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT A FLOOD  
RELIEF SOCIAL FUND**

This Congress are conscious that due to the of Global Warming many residential properties are regularly being subjected to the devastation of flooding. Such properties are now being denied access to flood insurance which then devalues or renders the property unsaleable. Generations of past Governments' have blindly overturned planning rules to allow for many properties to be built on natural flood planes have exasperated the situation putting many families who have heavily invested in such assets into a desperate unescapable situation.

We therefore ask GMB to develop a campaign and lobby Government and other culpable parties such as local authorities, housing developers to buy into a specific government scheme that will underwrite any losses due to flooding. Our aim is to see the Government set up a scheme where individuals who cannot access flood insurance being able to pay into for peace of mind and security that financial relief will be available in the event of being flooded. To push the Government to invest more in flood prevention schemes or look to compulsory purchase of properties at fair market value if flooding cannot be alleviated.

**RHONDDA CYNON TAFF R45 BRANCH**

**WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

ANDY WHEELAN (Wales & South West) Good afternoon, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* President, Congress, I stand here today not just as a

GMB representative but as someone who has seen the heartbreak and devastation that flooding brings to working-class families across our communities and, in particular, my community where I live. This motion is not just about policy, it is about people: about our members, our neighbours and our families, who have invested their lives, their savings and their hopes into homes now threatened by forces beyond their control. Climate change is not a distant threat. It is here now and it is battering our communities with relentless floods. Every year more families face the trauma of seeing their homes ruined, their possessions destroyed and their sense of security washed away. And yet as the waters recede, the support dries up. Insurance companies are turning their backs, leaving people unprotected and in many cases unable to sell or even live safely in their homes. Let's be clear, this is not an accident. It is a result of decades of government decisions, decisions that overturned planning rules to allow building on flood plains and to prioritise profit over people. Our members are left to pay the price, trapped in homes they cannot insure, cannot sell and sometimes cannot even repair.

This is why this motion calls for action. We demand that the Government step up and create a flood relief social fund, a safety net for those who have been abandoned by the market and by policy-makers. We want a scheme that gives piece of mind, that allows people to pay in and know that, should the worst happen, they will not be left alone. We want investment in real flood prevention and where that is not possible, we want fair compensation, compulsory purchase at a market value, so no family is left stranded. This is a matter of justice, it is a matter of dignity and it is a matter of solidarity. Congress, let us show that the GMB stands with every family facing the rising tide. Let us campaign, let us lobby and let us win a future where no one is left behind when the

waters rise. I urge you to support this motion and send a clear message: we will not abandon our communities to the floods. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Andy. Secunder?

MICHAEL WILSON (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 266. Congress, I am proud to second this vital motion from the RCT branch because the fight for a flood relief social fund is a fight for fairness, for compassion and for the future of our communities within the Rhondda Cynon Taff, where they have suffered turmoil and devastation from floods over the last decade. We have all seen the images of families wading through waterlogged streets, children's toys floating in ruined living rooms, cherished memories lost to the mud and the muck, but what we do not always see is the aftermath, the anxiety, the sleepless nights, the financial ruin when insurance is denied and the crushing realisation that your home, your sanctity has become a burden you cannot escape.

This is not just a climate crisis; it is a social crisis. It is a crisis made worse by years of government inaction and short-term thinking. A flood relief social fund is not a hand-out, it is a lifeline, it is recognition that in a just society we look after each other when disaster strikes. It is a practical humane response to a problem that will only get worse as the climate crisis deepens, and it is a call to hold responsible government, developers and local authorities to account, to make sure they are the part of the solution, not just the cause of the problem.

Let's campaign for a scheme that gives people back their security, their dignity and their hope. Let's demand investment in prevention and fair treatment for those who have already lost so much. Let's show that the GMB is not just a union for the workplace but a union for the whole community. Support this motion, stand with our members, stand with our communities. Together we can make a difference. I move.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mike, thank you. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to these motions? No? Can I ask Dean Gilligan from the COE to respond, please. Just before you go to the rostrum, can I have the movers and seconders of 196, 200 and 202, please?

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): President Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 260 and 263, which we are supporting with qualifications.

Turning first to Motion 260, we are supportive of the calls in the motion. However, our qualification is that it will ultimately be a matter for GMB Scotland to pursue.

On Motion 263, our qualification is that a just transition is now becoming a reality for workers losing their jobs to automation too, not just traditional heavy industries.

To sum up, Congress, we are asking that Motions 260 and 263 be supported with these qualifications. What a lovely short speech! Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Does GMB Scotland accept the qualification for Motion 260? (*Agreed*) Does London accept the qualification for Motion 263? (*Agreed*) And the CEC are supporting Motion 266. I will put those to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 260, please show. Anyone against? All those in favour of Motion 263, please show. Anyone against? All those in favour of Motion 266, please show. Anyone against?

*Motion 260 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 263 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Industrial & Economic Policy: Pay & Taxation**

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to motions under Industrial & Economic Policy: Pay & Taxation. Could I have the mover of Motion 196, please?

### **£20 MINIMUM HOURLY WAGE NOW**

#### **MOTION 196**

#### **196. £20 MINIMUM HOURLY WAGE NOW**

This Congress believes that the National Minimum Wage should be at least £20 an hour. This increase is essential to address the escalating cost of living, as many workers are struggling to pay their bills and maintain a decent quality of life.

With inflation driving up the cost of essentials like housing, energy, and food, the current wage levels are no longer sufficient to meet basic needs. A £20 minimum wage would help ensure that all workers can live with dignity and provide stability for themselves and their families. This

Congress supports industrial £20 an hour demands on a sector or employer basis where it is supported by our members.

### **S37 SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH**

#### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

CARINA SMITH (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. I am moving Motion 196 - £20 Minimum Hourly Wage Now. Congress, I would like you to listen very carefully to this statement. In the first three days of this year UK CEOs had already made the UK average salary of £37,450. In the first three days! This is not the minimum wage salary but the average, which means already CEOs have record levels of pay, and yet they have the audacity to say they are not paid enough compared to their US counterparts. These wealth inequalities have grown particularly since Covid with five of the world's richest men since 2022 doubling their wealth. These inequalities are causing huge societal fractures for the majority of working people in this country. I firmly believe it is the wealth inequalities that are causing the rise of far-right populism in this country, and they are threatening the very existence of us and our union.

In Labour's manifesto, which I campaigned on, £15 an hour was promised, but where is it? This pledge was a huge vote winner, so why has it not been honoured. From 1<sup>st</sup> April, companies have used inflation as a reason to raise their charges, but supermarkets have been proven to be in cahoots with each other, keeping prices artificially high. It is greedflation at its finest. Meanwhile shareholders receive record pay-outs.

With the cost-of-living crisis and utility bills rising, 2.3 million people in this country are relying on 2,500 food banks, which is more than the 1,350 branches of McDonalds. Congress, how is it that we have professionals such as nurses using food banks to feed their families? People should not live to work but live to thrive. Workers should not be dependent on charity shops whilst their corporate owners earn 55 times more than the very people that give them their profits. A decent quality of life will result in a happier and more productive and healthier society, which in turn will lead to less strain on the NHS and less on government having to top up low pay. £20 an hour is the minimum workers should receive to live with dignity, and stability for themselves and their families. Let's tax wealth and not work. If we did this, we could afford to pay people a decent and fair wage for the toil that they undertake.

Lastly, when two pints of beer are more than one hour's minimum wage, you know there is a problem. Congress, I urge you support the motion for a £20 Minimum Hourly Wage now. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Carina. Secunder?

JOSE GOMEZ (Southern): Seconding Motion 196 - £20 Minimum Hourly Wage Now. President, Congress, I believe the minimum wage should be £20 an hour. Millions of low-paid workers are being pushed to the brink by eye-watering bills and soaring prices, yet companies are making massive profits and handing massive pay rises to those at the very top. I am calling for a return to normal wage growth and an end to the longest pay squeeze in modern history. I hereby call for a £20 minimum hourly rate. Congress, please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jose. Mover of Motion 200, please.

## **TAX-FREE CHILDCARE INCOME GAP**

### **MOTION 200**

#### **200. TAX-FREE CHILDCARE INCOME GAP**

This Congress call on the Government to immediately begin increasing the tax-free childcare income cap annually by inflation to ensure that parents are not adversely affected by simply receiving a cost of living pay rise or see no financial benefit from promotions.

**B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH**

**LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

BEVERLEY GUNNING (London): Good afternoon President, good afternoon top table, good afternoon Congress. I am back! Second time at Congress, third-time speaker, moving Motion 200. We know that childcare is an essential lifeline allowing our members to maintain jobs, a source of income and even a sense of self. The UK is the most expensive nation for childcare not only in the EU but most of the countries in the world. Our motion is about the Government tax-free childcare scheme. To be eligible working parents need to earn the national minimum wage and each needs to earn less than £100,000 a year. Our motion asks for this to increase with inflation each year so fewer parents are penalised.

But the name is misleading and probably partly responsible for the scheme having a low take-up. This scheme is designed to that every 80 pence you put into your tax-free

childcare account the state will add 20 p. Sound great so far? However, to benefit from this scheme, first, you need to open an on-line tax-free childcare account, using the Government Gateway ID, which is rubbish. As we know, this requires a level of IT literacy. Secondly, there is a £500 quarterly cap so parents can only get a maximum government top-up of £500 every three months, which could impact those with higher childcare bills. Thirdly, if you are already claiming universal credit, accessing this tax-free childcare scheme will stop all your benefits, not just the childcare part. *(Cries of boo!)* Exactly. Let's really help women get back to work and make a childcare scheme that is accessible and actually supports families. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bev. Seconder? *(Formally seconded)* Mover of Motion 202, please.

## **COUNCIL TAX DEBT**

### **MOTION 202**

#### **202. COUNCIL TAX DEBT**

Council Tax debt can occur for a multitude of reasons, often to do with personal, financial or circumstantial hardship and unexpected circumstances. Legal frameworks exist to ensure that non-council tax debt is collected in an affordable way that is considerate of an individual's circumstances. However, the same legal framework that governs financial organisations does not apply to Council debt collection, which can often lead to Council bills for the full year after one missed payment.

In light of this, this conference calls upon the CEC to lobby Government on the following principles in relation to the collection of council tax debt:

1. Ethical debt collection: All Council tax debt collection will be carried out in a manner that is fair, transparent and ethical. The Council will not pursue payment plans that are disproportionate to the debtor's financial circumstances
2. Signposting: This Council will continue to signpost to organisations that offer support for those experiencing debt and financial coercive control
3. This Council will only bill an individual for the full year as a final resort, and after all other options for repayment have been exhausted

This motion seeks to request the CEC to lobby to ensure that Council debt collection is underpinned by principles of understanding, fairness and responsibility, prioritising the welfare of taxpayers and ethical recovery principles.

#### **CARDIFF & DISTRICT X12 BRANCH**

#### **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

LEON JONES (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 202. Like many of the fabulous people who have heard before me and will after, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Colleagues, I move this motion because something is fundamentally broken in the way council tax debt is collected in this country. Every year thousands of working people - our members, our neighbours, our friends - find themselves plunged into crisis, not because they won't pay but because they simply can't, often through no fault of their own. Let's be clear, missing just one council tax payment can be catastrophic. Within weeks people can be forced to pay the entire year's bill, with bailiffs knocking at the door and extra charges piling on top. For many this is not just a financial blow, it is a tipping point that can destroy lives. It is a system so aggressive, so rapid that even payday lenders would blush. No other creditor is

allowed to act with such disregard for personal circumstances. So why is it, Congress, that banks and credit card companies must act responsibly, must offer support, must sign-post to help, but councils can escalate so quickly and so harshly? We have a legal framework for financial organisations that protects people from being pushed over the edge. Yet when it comes to council tax those protections vanish.

This motion calls for real change. It calls for ethical debt collection, fair, transparent and proportionate for personal circumstances. It calls for proper signposting to support and for billing the full year only as a last resort, not as a first response. It is about treating people with dignity, the dignity they deserve, not as mere numbers on a spreadsheet.

The Government is finally consulting on these issues thanks to tireless campaigning from across the movement and from campaigners like Martin Lewis, but we must keep up the pressure. We must demand that council tax debt collection is underpinned by understanding, fairness and responsibility. So, let's show today that we the GMB stand with those in hardship. Let's demand a system that prioritises people's welfare over their punishment. Congress, I urge you to support this motion and send a clear message. Enough is enough. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Leon, thank you. Secunder?

JASON FOLLOW (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 202, Council Tax Debt. Again second-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, I am seconding this motion because I have seen first-hand the devastation that council tax debt

collection can cause. Behind every statistic is a real person - a single parent choosing between heating and paying the council, a worker recovering from illness, a family facing redundancy. It is not just the physical devastation that is cruel, it is the lack of humanity. One missed payment and suddenly you are facing a court order, bailiffs and charges that make it impossible to ever catch up. For the average household a missed £140 payment can turn into a demand of over £1,600 in just three weeks. If you cannot pay, the cost keeps rising pushing people further into despair. Other creditors are required to offer support, to take time, to help people find a way out. Councils should be held to the same standards. We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for basic decency and fairness. This motion is about making sure that councils act ethically, signpost the support and use every option before moving to the nuclear option of billing for the full year. It is about protecting the vulnerable and restoring faith in our public institutions. Let's stand together for a system that works for people, not against them. Let's make council tax debt collection fair, humane and responsible. Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jason. Anybody want to speak in opposition to these motions? No. Then can I ask Syed Raza to come and speak on behalf of the CEC, please?

SYED RAZA (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to Motions 196, 200 and Motion 202.

On Motion 196, £20 Minimum Hourly Wage Now, the CEC supports with the qualification: "GMB acknowledge the need of the move towards a £20 an hour National

Minimum Wage in the near future while the cost of living continues to rise. In the meantime support sectoral and workplace demands for £20 an hour where negotiators believe there is member support for it.” Through carrying the CEC Statement on Cost of Living (GMB Congress 2022) agreed to raise a GMB demand for the National Minimum Wage to be raised to what the GB considers a real living wage to £15 an hour. The statement explicitly justified this increase on the basis of historic rises to the cost of living and existing policy, stating that: “GMB continually review inflation rates and from time to time bring further proposals for up-rating our headline demands for debate at a future Congress.” Latest estimates based on ONS inflation data on the changes to the Retail Price Index and OBR economic forecast project that £15 an hour in June 2022 is worth £17.28 as of early 2025, and will be worth £20 by the end of 2029, over four years from GMB Congress 2025.

Motion 202, Council Tax Debt, - the CEC also support with qualification. The motion raises an important a concerning issue and we note findings by the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute last year that more than 3 million people have council tax arrears, particularly those more likely to be in the lowest paid work, such as those with mental health problems, younger people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. GMB recognises that 14 years of central Government austerity policies has left many councils and those paying council tax in a desperate financial situation.

The CEC’s first qualification is to support the motion’s call for reforming council tax debt collection in line with the GMB wider policy set out in the CEC Special Report on Local Government & Austerity carried by Congress in 2019. The report sets out GMB support for reforming the currently regressive structure of local government funding

and to establish a system that is fair, progressive and redistributive for both local authorities and those struggling with council tax debt. Secondly, GMB's ability to lobby central Government on the issues will be limited. Our greatest ability to make a difference on the issue is to continue organising and campaigning for improved pay and conditions for the lowest-paid workers. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Syed. Does Southern accept the qualification on Motion 196? (*Agreed*) Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 202? (*Agreed*) I will put those to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 196, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 200 that the CEC are supporting in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 202, all those in favour, please show. That is also carried.

*Motion 196 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 200 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 202 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We continue with motions under Pay & Taxation. Can the movers of 201, 203 and 204 please be ready to speak. I should have asked them earlier but could you come down now. Please could you come down now and the mover of 201 come up to the rostrum?

## **WEALTH TAX**

### **MOTION 201**

#### **201. WEALTH TAX**

The GMB Unite M23 branch asks this Congress to come together to support a wealth tax on employers and the wealthiest individuals to help fill the black hole that the Labour government is desperate to fill but is so badly missing the point by raising national insurance and taking away the winter fuel allowance. 'The profit margins of the average British firm have rocketed by 30 per cent since before the pandemic. If we taxed 1 percent on the wealthiest 1 percent, the so-called black hole would be gone.' Members at the Labour Conference and the TUC Conference have supported a wealth tax. Can Congress put its support behind this (or a similar!) proposal and leverage our union's membership to ensure that we have a say in increasing investment in Britain and improving worker's lives?

### **M23 GMB UNITE BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

JAMIE WALKER (London): I am moving Motion 201, Wealth Tax. The growing inequality in our society when it comes to the rich getting richer while the poor have things snatched from them left and right, in terms of rising energy prices, rising food prices, rising everything, is really starting to bite at all of our heels.

Congress, the London Region proposes that we support the implementation of a wealth tax on employers and the wealthiest individuals to help fill the fiscal gap. GMB has always fought for a fairer tax system and, although a wealth tax does seem to scare our Labour Chancellor, this is still one of the most effective way to bring money to bear to help those of us in these days of our lives when again prices keep on rising.

Reports indicate that the profit margins of the average British firm have increased since

the pandemic. One only has to look at the ever-increasing profits of energy companies. Their profits rise but we are still paying more and this is profit that can be spent on society through a wealth tax. Meanwhile working people are being asked to bear the brunt of economic recovery through measures such as raising national insurance and cutting essential benefits such as the Winter Fuel Allowance.

It is important to note that wealth taxes are not unprecedented. Countries like Norway, Spain and Switzerland have implemented different versions of wealth taxation and the amount that is drawn from those companies and individuals benefiting from the current conditions there is not seen as a punishment on them for doing well but an acknowledgement that their money can do even more for all of us, and who can argue with that? I am actually asking the question, “Who can argue with that?” We know they are going to but that is actually not the point. The region acknowledges the CEC’s qualification on the motion that a 1% wealth tax should not be the sole solution. Indeed, there are various methods to implement wealth taxation and a comprehensive approach should be considered by Congress.

I am happy that our motion should not focus on a specific rate but be about initiating a national conversation on taxing extreme wealth to rebuild our public services and to invest in our nation’s future, to benefit the GMB’s members, workers and the public. By supporting this motion, we affirm our commitment to a fairer tax system which ensures the wealthy contribute their fair share. Let’s leverage our union’s influence to advocate for policies that promote economic justice and improve the lives of workers across the UK. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie. Secunder?

KIM HENDRY (London): Pleased to be seconding Motion 201, Wealth Tax. President, sisters and brothers of Congress, last Saturday the first big anti-austerity March under Starmer's Labour Government took place, with tens of thousands of fellow trade unionists marching through central London as we gathered here in Brighton. The theme of the demo was "Tax the rich to fund public services and to end welfare cuts".

Since Starmer's Labour Party won power last year they talked a lot about the spending crisis they have inherited, the black hole in public finances, why they have to stick to the fiscal rules, parroting the language of neo-liberalism and of the capitalist ruling class that got us into this mess in the first place. They told us sternly of tough choices that they need to make as a result. But as delegates have said all week, so far, all these tough choices involve a tax on the working class and the poor and the most vulnerable. Labour's first Budget last October showed whose side Starmer and Reeves are on, introducing a new round of austerity in all but name, and since then they have cut the Winter Fuel Allowance (partly reinstated in a U-turn today), refused to remove the two-child child benefit cap, imposed huge cuts to disability benefits, bolstered the number of migrants they have deported and much more, and they are punching down and they are making the working class pay. At the same time, they refuse to introduce a wealth tax, or make any attempt to transfer the wealth that has been built up, stolen, as pointed out earlier, by the privileged few in our society, back to us, the workers who create that wealth.

Britain in 2025 is a country with obscene extremes of wealth and poverty. It is the misery that Reform feeds on and exploits. The richest 1% own more wealth than 70% (48 million of us) in our society. The *Sunday Times* Rich List shows that the wealth of the richest 350 people stands at £772.8 billion. Compare that to the black hole that Labour say they inherited which is just £22 billion. So, let's tax the rich, let's take the wealth - I am going to finish -let's take the wealth and power out of the hands of the superrich and let's reject Labour's politics of austerity and division. Please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Kim, thank you. Mover of Motion 203, please?

## **REALIGNMENT OF ROYAL ASSETS**

### **MOTION 203**

#### **203. REALIGNMENT OF ROYAL ASSETS**

This Congress believes it's time to campaign to get the vast holdings of the Duchy of Cornwall and Lancaster to be brought into public ownership.

We call upon GMB to start a campaign to lobby government to put an end to the privilege that exempt the vast holdings of the Duchy of Lancaster and Cornwall to avoid all taxes and look to take these holdings into public ownership.

To encourage our affiliates and TUC to develop and campaign for a realignment of such assets that have grown to cover a third of the country by avoiding taxes over generations and having exceptional privilege to charge excessive rents and fees for rents, licences, and various other easy money generating schemes. It's time we held His Majesty the King and HRH The Prince of Wales to account ensuring they pay the same tax liabilities as everyone else on the private

hidden profits estimated to be in excess of 50 million per year. And that all this Duchy Territory becomes subject to Death Duties.

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAFF R45 BRANCH**

### **WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

GEORGIA CHEDZEY (Wales & South West): President, Congress, moving Motion 203. Congress, I speak today not just to propose this motion, but to ignite a spark for fairness, for justice and for a Britain that truly belongs to us all. Let's be honest, the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster are relics of a bygone age. For centuries these vast estates, spanning a third of our country, have been shielded by privilege and immune from the taxes that every working person in this hall pays without question. While our members struggle to pay their bills and while public services are stretched to breaking point, these royal assets quietly generate tens of millions in private profit every year, untouched by the rules that bind the rest of us. Is it right that in 2025 the King and the Prince of Wales enjoy these exceptional privileges, collecting rents, charging fees and dodging taxes, while our communities face food banks and austerity? Is it right that death duties, which every grieving family must face, simply do not apply to Duchies?

Congress, enough is enough. It is time to bring these assets into public ownership. It is time to end the era of easy money for the few and start building a future where our country's wealth is shared by the many. This is not just about pounds and pence. It is about principle. It is about holding power to account and demanding that those at the very top play by the same rules as the rest of us. Let's launch a campaign that brings our movement together, the GMB, our affiliates, the TUC and others, standing

shoulder to shoulder to demand real change. Let's lobby this Government and any Government to end Royal exemptions and reclaim those assets for the public good.

Let's pass this motion and lead the fight for a fairer, more equal country. I move.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Georgia. Secunder?

SUZANNE WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): President, Congress, Susan Williams from the great super-duper strong Wales & South West Region. (*Applause*) Congress, I want to speak not just as a trade unionist but as a parent, a neighbour and a citizen who believes in justice. We all know what is at stake. Every day our members work hard, pay their taxes and contribute to the fabric of our society. Yet while we are all tightening our belts, the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall have quietly amassed fortunes, shielded from scrutiny, untouched by the taxman and free from the burdens the rest of us bear. This is not just about money. It is about the values that we hold dear: fairness, transparency and accountability. It is about saying loud and clear that no one, no matter how blue their blood, should be above the law. It is about making sure that the immense wealth generated from these lands is used for the benefit of everyone, not just a privileged few. Imagine what we could do if these assets were brought into public ownership. Imagine the hospitals, the hospitals, the social care we could fund. Imagine the hope we could bring to communities that have been left behind for too long. This motion is not about envy; it is about justice: It is about ending a system that is rigged in the favour of a few and building a future that works for all. So, let's stand together. Let's demand that the King and the Prince of Wales pay their fair

share. Let's call for a realignment of Royal assets and a real alignment that puts people before privilege. Congress, let's make history. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Suzanne. Mover of Motion 204?

## **REFORMING ROYAL FUNDING**

### **MOTION 204**

#### **204. REFORMING ROYAL FUNDING**

This Congress notes the following:

- The Royal Family cost a lot more than publicly declared, at least £510m a year.
- The true cost includes the sovereign grant, which itself is set to rise by £45m a year.
- The cost includes lost revenues from the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, which the record shows are state assets at the disposal of parliament, not the private property of the Windsor family.
- The Sovereign Grant is funded wholly by the government, not the Crown Estate. The Crown Estate is a state asset, created in 1960 to manage some Crown (state) lands, but it's only been since 2011 that it has been used as a smokescreen for royal expenditure, by artificially linking the grant to Crown Estate profits.
- The huge and growing cost of the royals is primarily due to personal and private costs, such as an excessive number of homes, avoidance of large tax bills and private incomes being drawn from the duchies.
- Using or abusing public office for private gain is a form of corruption, and this corruption is why the monarchy costs so much. Secrecy, dishonesty and deference all feed a culture of impunity and entitlement.
- Comparable heads of state cost as little as £5m a year, excluding security.

- There is no evidence to support claims of an economic benefit from having the monarchy.

This Congress calls on the GMB to campaign for the following royal funding reforms:

- Scrapping the Sovereign Grant.
- Providing a budget of £5-10m a year, to provide an office and staff for the head of state.
- Providing a salary for the King of £189,000 and peg any increases to that of the Prime Minister.

This figure is 110% of the prime minister's salary.

- Roll all Duchy assets into the Crown Estate and rename the estate the National Estate, changing the law to make public ownership explicit.
- Limit the King to two homes that the state will provide security and staff for, one in central London and one in the countryside. This will bring the head of state into line with the Prime Minister.
- Scrap all provision of homes or funding for all other members of the royal family. Ensure all royals have the same tax obligations as everyone else.
- End all royal exemptions from the Freedom of Information Act and include the royal household and the royal archives in the scope of the Act in relation to official communications, documents and records.
- Hold an honest and public inquiry into royal finances and spending, one which has full access to all records going back as far as necessary.
- Take royal financial reporting out of the hands of the palace and ensure comparisons with similar heads of state are included in any reports.

This Congress believes that the cost of the monarchy should and could be slashed to just £5-10m a year. Only by having an accountable head of state can we put an end to this abuse of public money.

**X59 NW LONDON BRANCH**

**LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

JAMES ROLLES (London): Good afternoon President, Congress. Corruption is the abuse of public office for personal gain. Unfortunately, we have to class the House of Windsor as corrupt. Secrecy surrounds the Royal Family and they lobby our Government to secure exemptions and to personally enrich themselves. This motion is not calling for the overthrow of the Monarchy but wants to take an honest look at how much the Royal Family costs the UK taxpayer, and what alternatives can be found to alleviate the burden to the public. The Royals cost the UK more than £500 million a year. This includes the cost to local councils, security for two dozen homes, the routine use of helicopters, private jets, the military, the RAF. Royal funding is completely shrouded in mystery. The House of Windsor is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. That half a billion pounds the Royal Family costs us represents a scandalous abuse of public money. How can we talk about cutting Winter Fuel Allowance when we give Prince William a personal yearly income of £23 million?

This motion demands that the Royal budget is slashed below £10 million per year and that the King is given a salary that is pegged to our Prime Minister's salary. There is a big shopping list attached to this motion and I would be asking all delegates to have a read of it.

Finally, we as a region are slightly disappointed at the CEC qualification that you are about to hear. The CEC erroneously claim that there is nothing that they can do to meet the demands of this motion. We are not asking for Gary to knock on the door of Buckingham Palace and ask for a meeting with the King and demand that he cleans up

Royal funding. We are just asking to acknowledge this issue so we can sign open letters to the press, we can support resolutions at the TUC, we can stand together with our affiliate unions and assist each other. So please support and don't let the Cavaliers over here get their way! Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you James. Secunder?

SIMON RUSH (London): President, comrades, seconding Motion 204. We treat the Royal Family in this country like gods, the vain Pharaohs of Egypt or Roman Emperors. Conference, they are not gods, they are made up of flesh and blood just like us, but they expect us the workers of this country to subsidise their upkeep. The Royals earn income through vast Crown estates. If you think of London, Regent's Street, Grosvenor Square, a great big long list, those are just some examples and other lands wherever they hold them. Ask yourself a question: why are they exempt from FoIs? They should not be if they have nothing to hide. We as the GMB are transparent and held to account, central Government is held to account, many organisations are held to account - FoIs. It is time in the 21st century that this country's Royal Family is held to account. Why cannot we lodge an FOI, for example on a charity trust where currently members of the Royal Family are involved in over 1,000 organisations either as a patron or president? A simple FoI could show how much money they contribute each year for any particular charity from their very own full wallets, or how many private jets does any particular Royal use for personal use per annum? Now for Prince Andrew - better not go there, I'll get into trouble! As I said, it is time their financial records are not hidden but are available when we request, the same as all other public bodies. I call them public bodies as they receive income from us. That makes them a public body in my book. However,

they are not a nationalised industry but a group that expects us to contribute to their luxury lifestyles.

We know some Royals from the past have had interesting links with Germany during the Second World War. Wouldn't it be interesting to have access to that full picture? Why is this hidden? If you agree with this and back the removal of the sovereign grant while as taxpayers we contribute to the upkeep of their many homes, please vote of favour of this motion. Thank you, comrades. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. You just finished in time before I was going to ask you to wind up. Thank you. Anybody want to speak in opposition? Yes, we have an opposition speaker. (*Boos!*) No, we do not have that reaction. People are allowed (*Cries of "Free Speech!"*) Please don't, we are allowed to have opposition to a debate.

PHIL HARRIS (North East, Yorkshire & Humberside): From Rotherham, part of the great North East, Yorkshire and Humberside Region. Thank you, Madam President, Congress. It is difficult to get up here in a room like this and support the Royals but my argument is more nuanced. My argument is about keeping all industries going. Royal assets from the Duchy of Cornwall and Lancaster, the Sandringham Estate, Balmoral, et cetera, are all part of the nature and make-up of our country. We should not be taking them into public ownership otherwise we are at risk. Like other public industries - rail, water, gas - we have seen them split up and when they have been privatised some have flourished, some have not. We should also be fighting against death duties. We pay enough tax in life and we should not be paying them in death. Forget the Royals and think about the people at the sharp end, the staff in their homes,

the gamekeepers, the people tending the gardens. They are our members and at the end of the day we should be supporting them. Privatising the Royals, or more specifically privatising the Duchy Estate is putting them at risk.

THE PRESIDENT: Phillip, which motion was that, 203? Thank you. Got more opposition. (*Applause*)

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Speaking against Motions 203 and 204. Comrades, it is quite interesting, isn't it, that when I moved the discussion earlier about assisted dying, I think the strongest argument the CEC put forward is this is a very controversial view that a lot of our members would disagree with and would think it was something the union should not be taking a position on. The last time we did a survey of our membership about their views on the Royal Family was a confidential survey that was done when Sir Paul Kenney got his well-deserved knighthood, and it showed that something like 95% of GMB members support the Royal Family. I think we have to acknowledge the gap between the activists who have very strong left-wing views and many of our members, who do not have strong political views about a lot of things and who do cherish the traditions of Britain and the traditions of the Royal Family, and I do not think this is a position we want to fight and die in a ditch on, to be honest.

We can see that the Royal Family, which is supported by many people, has got its uses for the British state, the soft power of gaining trade deals and things. We recently saw the power that the King was able to demonstrate going to Canada to show his support and solidarity for Canada staying an independent country against the predatory claims of the United States and Donald Trump. So, I think this is a bit nuanced and I think the

rhetoric is unusual. I am going to end on a slightly strange note. Remember there has only ever been one Communist Government in the Commonwealth and that was Granada under the New Jewel Movement which did have the Royal Family, and they did not abolish the Royal Family because they had better things to do. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Andy, can I just check that was on two Motions 202 and 204? Thank you.

A SPEAKER: (Inaudible comment)

THE PRESIDENT: No, you don't! Okay. Because there has been opposition, does the mover of Motion 203 want to respond? Anybody on 203 want to come and respond? I am taking 203 first. If you do not want the right of reply, you do not have to take it. Then 204, please, if you want the right of reply?

JAMES ROLLES: Thank you for that very robust comment back. Look, I get it. We do not want to abolish the Royal Family and we understand our members do not want to abolish the Royal Family, but we have to make it transparent. If we have got to have these leeches at the top, you know, we have to make it transparent. (*Applause*) I will give you an example. In the Republic of Ireland, they have a head of state who is elected - good for them - and that only costs the Republic of Ireland €5 million a year rather than half a billion pounds for God's sake. So, we are not saying get rid of them. I take the thing that there is soft power and I take the thing that there are jobs involved. But I am sure in Republican France the people who do the gardens in Versailles have jobs. I understand that. We are not talking abolishment. We are trying to make it as

transparent as possible. If we have to have them, let's make it okay, let's make it better.

Thank you, bye. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: If you want your right of reply, that is fine, come up.

GEORGIA CHEDZEY: Thank you. I just wanted to echo what my colleague said. It is about public funding for the public and that money going back into things that are important for people like us, not the people at the top. Thank you for listening.  
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: It is always good to end the day on a bit of controversy. That is good. We now ask Maxine Butter from the CEC to respond, please.

MAXINE BUTLER (CEC): Responding to Motions 201, 203 and 204. Don't shout at me!

On Motion 201, Wealth Tax, the CEC supports with qualification. GMB continues to fight for a fairer tax system in a society that still rewards wealth more than work. We recognise in the absence of a wealth tax the rich are getting richer whilst workers continue to be forced to tighten their belts (Motion 513, Congress 2025) There must urgently be a national conversation on taxing extremes of wealth, to re-build our public services and invest in building new infrastructure, as the Labour Government plans a decade of national renewal.

The CEC's qualification is that while GMB supports a wealth tax on the richest 1% as the motion proposes, this will be one of many options available to the Government for taxing wealth which will need to be explored in more detail.

On Motion 203, Realignment of Royal Assets, the CEC also supports with qualification. The CEC recognises the broad aim of the motion, which is to achieve more accountability and fairness regarding the Royal Family's assets and public funding of the Monarchy by ensuring they are not exempt from paying the same tax liability as everyone else.

The CEC's qualification is that any GMB's campaign on this issue would have very limited influence, but if an appropriate opportunity arises, we can raise this with the relevant government department.

Lastly on Motion 204, Reforming Royal Funding (London Region), the CEC also supports with qualification. GMB policy has historically recognised the strong views amongst our members on both sides regarding the abolition of the Monarchy, and in the current economic climate campaigning for its abolition would not be the best use of GMB resources or time. (Motion 128, Congress 2010). That being said, the motion calls for an accountable head of state, not the abolition of the current one. It would be out of step with GMB's own democratic purpose and vision set out in our rulebook to not accept the principle of a more accountable head of state both politically and in terms of public funding. Therefore, the CEC is supporting the broad aim of the motion, with the qualification that any GMB campaigning on this issue would have very limited influence. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Maxine. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 201? (*Agreed*) Does London accept the qualification on 204? (*Agreed*) and does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 203.

A DELEGATE: We have to!

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you. Congress, the CEC are supporting all these motions with the qualification that you have just heard. So, all those in favour of Motion 201, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 204, please show. Any against? That is carried. And all those in favour of Motion 203, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 201 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 203 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 204 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Conference, the SOC Chair Karen Dudley will now advise on the protocols for the elections scheduled for tomorrow. Please listen carefully.

#### **Standing Orders Committee Report No. 4**

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): I am moving SOC Report No. 4, Emergency Motions. The SOC has agreed a further emergency motion. This is

Emergency Motion 6 from London Region - EHRC Code of Practice Consultation. The day and time that this will be heard will be advised as soon as possible.

### **SOC Election Protocol**

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Election of President and Vice President. Congress, there will be elections for the President and Vice President tomorrow, Tuesday 10th June. The SOC has been advised that the elections will be contested. The procedure for the election is set out in SOC Report No. 1 at page 25 of your Final Agenda. The outline of the process is as follows. The General Secretary will announce the names of the candidates just prior to the close of business today. Tomorrow morning each candidate will be entitled to make an election address prior to the distribution of ballot papers. The number of minutes allowed for this will be up to five minutes. Congress will be starting at 9 am and the first item of business will be the election addresses. Following the guest speaker, the General Member Auditors will deliver ballot papers to each regional secretary and the regional secretary will issue the ballot papers to each delegate who is entitled to vote. Ballot papers will be issued to CEC members by the General Secretary via the Executive Officer. Once completed ballot papers should be placed in one of the two ballot boxes which will be placed on tables by the platform at the front of the hall. The ballot boxes will be supervised by the General Member Auditors. Voting will close at 3.30 pm on Tuesday 10th June, when the General Member Auditors will take the ballot papers and count the votes. The results will be announced to Congress after this. President, Congress I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 4.

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Karen. All agreeing on that report, please show. Any against?

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

KAREN DUDLEY: General Secretary, can I ask you to take over?

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, Karen. I will now read the names for both the election of President and Vice-President. Candidates for President first, in alphabetical order. For the President's election, the candidates are: Gordon Gibb, GMB Midlands, Barbara Plant, GMB Southern. For the Vice-President election, the candidates are as follows: Tracy Ashton, GB Midlands, Kevin Buchanan, GMB Scotland, Sonya Davis, GMB Southern, Dave Douglas, GMB North East, Yorkshire & Humber, Kevin Jones, GMB Wales & South West. The ballot paper tomorrow will have two candidates on the President ballot paper and five candidates on the Vice President ballot paper, thank you. (*Applause*)

### **International Solidarity Video: CIWU, Sri Lanka**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, just before we close, I would like to play a short video from our sister union in Sri Lanka - the Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union - who have been organising to seek union recognition at ATG Gloves.

This company manufactures gloves which will no doubt be used by some of our members in construction and other manual work. However, the company in Sri Lanka

where they are made has been dismissing workers for trying to organise for trade union recognition. The CIWU have a request for solidarity from our members who do come across these gloves in their workplace. *(Video played) (Applause)*

### **Announcements**

THE PRESIDENT: Another example of why international solidarity is so important. Four announcements before the end of Congress today. One from the RMA stall. The frog was won by Yvonne Thomas, Midlands Region, and his name was Charlie. They made £30 on that so please collect that, Yvonne, from the RMA. If you are buying cans or you have cans, save the ring pull. There is a box apparently on the GMB table at the back. If you put them in there they will be used to fundraise for guide dogs, so the more we can collect that will be really helpful. Also, somebody has reported they have lost a black tote bag with a white picture on it and it does contain a GMB laptop with colourful sticker and Congress papers. Please look out for it and if you find it, hand it into reception.

Lastly Congress does start at 9 o'clock. You might want to get here early because there will be a bag search as we have a political speaker tomorrow so it might take a bit longer to get into Congress tomorrow. Enjoy your evening and see tomorrow morning. Thank you.

*Congress adjourned.*

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- <sup>iii</sup> Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower, Labour Party Manifesto, 2024: [Make Britain a clean energy superpower – The Labour Party](#)
- <sup>iv</sup> OEUK Business Outlook 2025 shows UK energy reserves could cut imports and boost growth, Offshore Energies UK, 25 March 2025: [OEUK Business Outlook 2025 shows UK energy reserves could cut imports and boost growth | Offshore Energies UK \(OEUK\)](#)
- <sup>v</sup> 21 carbon storage licenses accepted by 14 companies, Insider.co.uk, 23 September 2023: [21 carbon storage licences accepted by 14 companies - Business Insider](#)
- <sup>vi</sup> Oil and Gas Pricing Mechanism: A consultation to develop a predictable fiscal response to future oil and gas price shocks, HM Treasury, March 2024: [Oil and Gas Price Mechanism Consultation Final PDF 1 .pdf](#)
- <sup>vii</sup> UK among top five most expensive countries for childcare – as nursery fees set to rise again, Independent, 11 February 2025: [UK among top five most expensive countries for childcare as nursery fees set to rise again | The Independent](#)
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