

GMB
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 ONE
(Sunday, 8th June 2025)

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FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

SUNDAY, 8th JUNE 2025

MORNING SESSION

(Conference assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

Call to Order

THE PRESIDENT: Could I call Congress to order. Welcome to all of you to Brighton.

Banner Ceremony

THE PRESIDENT: We will now move on to the traditional opening of Congress which is the wonderful Banner Ceremony. This year North West & Irish Region will be forming the Banner Party. The Race Network and Retired Members Association banners will also form part of the procession this year. The music for this year's ceremony will be Bob Marley and the Wailers "Get Up Stand Up". *(Applause)*

I call Congress to order for the opening ceremony. Please stand to greet the national banners. *(The music of 'Get Up Stand Up' was played) (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: For those people with the banners it is such a moving start to Congress. Even the General Secretary was bobbing away to the music there.

Obituaries

THE PRESIDENT: I now call on Congress to stand in silence as mark of respect for departed GMB colleagues. Names will be shown on the screen and a copy of the Obituary list is on page 10 of the Congress guide. Please stand if you are able. Thank you.

Obituary list shown on screen.

Congress stood in silent tribute.

THE PRESIDENT: They may be gone as part of our GMB family but they will never be forgotten.

Safety Procedures

THE PRESIDENT: I have just got to give out some safety procedures first. You will find details of the emergency procedures for the venue in the Congress Guide document on page 6 and this includes the fire evacuation procedure. Meeting room 14 has been allocated as a prayer room which is at the back of Brighton Centre but can be accessed via the lift through the syndicate wing. Regions also have more information and the address for the Al-Medinah Mosque in the red baskets.

Welcome to Delegates and Visitors

THE PRESIDENT: Welcome, delegates and visitors. I hope you have all had safe journeys here. We have got many new delegates this year - and some familiar faces. Before I introduce the platform party, Congress will need to agree on the position of Honorary Vice Chair, who will assist me in chairing Congress throughout the week. As you may be aware, we currently have a vacancy for Vice President, a vacancy which should be filled this week and take up office once Congress has closed on Thursday.

Congress, on 23rd April 2025 the CEC amended their by-law adopted October 2024 that created a position of Honorary Vice Chair. The CEC's decision was to remove the clause preventing the Honorary Vice Chair from chairing Congress so that Malcolm Sage can assist the National President in co-chairing Congress this week. The CEC is therefore proposing to you, Congress that you also agree that Malcolm assists me this week in co-chairing Congress.

In order for us to progress with the week's business I would like to put that proposal to the vote. This is a vote for delegates only, if you do not have "delegate" written on your credentials you are not permitted to vote. All those in favour of the position of Honorary Vice Chair for Congress 2025 held by Malcolm Sage, please show. (*Show of hands*) Thank you. I think that was unanimous. I do not think anybody is against. No, thank you very much. Malcolm, welcome to the chair. (*Applause*)

I would now like to introduce the members of the platform party, as you have just voted, we have Malcolm Sage, Honorary Vice Chair and Gary Smith, General Secretary and Treasurer. Throughout the week we will be joined by members of the CEC and

Regional Secretaries as well as the Research & Policy team who will be assisting with the agenda, and other members of the GMB staff assisting with Congress.

Could I please welcome the following members of GMB staff and all organisations who help make Congress run and be inclusive. Our General Member Auditors who will be supervising counting of votes are Jayne Davies (North West & Irish Region), Kevin Fox (North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region), Stephen Horton (Midlands Region).

Joining this year to record Congress our verbatim shorthand writer is Mary Krelle. Welcome Mary. (*Applause*) This year we also are joined by sign language interpreters from Interpreting Matters. Please welcome Karen Green, Helen Foulkes and Benjamin Gorman. Sorry, there is a long list of people to thank but it is only right that we do. I would also like to welcome and thank the live subtitle writers from Interpreting Matters who will be providing this service remotely.

And thanks also must go to the team at the Brighton Centre working under our Event Manager at the Centre, Michael Kirman-Marcham. Thank you to all the Centre staff who have laid out the room and are stewarding, catering and making sure we are all welcome. Michael has worked with GMB on many Congresses over the years but this will be his last event as he will be retiring, so thank you, Michael (*Applause*)

Other suppliers I would like to thank as well are Exhibit World, U2 Events, Full Spectrum Printers and of course Pellacraft. Without these organisations we would not have Congress running quite so smoothly.

Of course a big thanks to Gary Maziere and T5 Event Media, who provide all our staging and PA equipment in the main hall and fringes to make sure Congress really looks and feels like it always does.

Most importantly could I extend a warm welcome to all first-time delegates, (*Applause*) and welcome back all delegates who we have not seen for many years in person.

As you know, a motion was unanimously passed at our Congress in 2017 in support of the Total Eclipse of the S*n campaign on banning the S*n newspaper from all GMB buildings, GMB conferences and all GMB meetings. This paper remains hostile to our movement, and we shall never forget the suffering it has caused and still causes, through its lies and misreporting.

Could I also remind delegates that all Congress sessions are transmitted live on the GMB website and YouTube. Please ensure that you refrain from using inappropriate language and from making personal attacks on staff or any other individuals while you make your speeches.

Make sure you remember to say your name and region clearly for the verbatim record and so we all get to know each other. Please also mention if you are a first-time speaker because you will get a big round of applause.

Delegates will be able to find all the important documents for the week in your delegates pack, which should include the one-page Delegate Outline Programme and Order of Business, Income & Expenditure Report and the Final Agenda & Congress Guide. This

document gives you information on Congress motions, CEC rule amendments, SOC Guidelines for Congress Business, including time limits for speakers, Standing Orders Committee report No. 1, Representation Statements for Congress, composite motions, fringe meetings, exhibitions and seating plan.

If there are any changes to business on the timetable, I will give you advance warning. Sorry there is a lot of information to be given out at the very beginning of Congress.

Roll Call

Would all Regional Secretaries please notify the Congress Office of any changes to your delegation. Please use the e-mail address for the Congress Office as the first port of call for any issues.

The names of all Regional Tellers are on page 4 of the Congress Guide. All Tellers must remain in the hall whilst Congress is in session and delegates must be in their allotted seats when or if a vote is taken. To see if you are eligible to vote, please look down at your Congress Credential. If it says the word “Delegate” on it then you can vote. All others in the hall are not eligible to vote.

Standing Orders Committee

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Standing Orders and could I congratulate Karen Dudley on her election as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee for the third time. Well done Karen and best of luck! (*Applause*)

The names of members of the Standing Orders Committee are on page 27 of your Final Agenda.

I would also like to remind Congress that the Standing Orders Committee is made up of Congress delegates, each elected by your own delegation. They are your colleagues and work to ensure that Congress runs to preserve our debate and democracy in this hall.

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1

GMB CONGRESS 2025 STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO 1

The business of Congress will be conducted in accordance with the Agenda, the Programme and the Guidelines for Congress Business, subject to changes at the President's discretion.

Times for Congress

The Standing Orders Committee wishes to draw the attention of Delegates to the starting times of the morning and afternoon sessions set out in the Congress programme as follows:

Sunday 8 June

9.30 am – 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Monday 9 June – Tuesday 10 June

9.00 am – 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Wednesday 11 June

9.00 am – 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm – 2.30 pm

Thursday 12 June

9.00 am – Lunchtime

The Standing Orders Committee recommends that the President be authorised to close each session when appropriate, without further reference to the Standing Orders Committee or to Congress.

Times for Speakers

The Standing Orders Committee recommends the following Time Limits for Speakers.

General Motions and Rule Amendments:

Movers up to	4 Minutes
Seconders up to	2 Minutes
Other Speakers up to	2 Minutes

Officers' Reports:

General Secretary up to	10 Minutes
Movers of Section Reports up to	5 Minutes
Questions up to	1 Minute

Officers' and Section Reports, and questions to them, should relate only to matters of general policy, and not to details of negotiations.

Special Reports and CEC Statements:

Mover up to	6 Minutes
Seconder up to	3 Minutes
Other Speakers up to	3 Minutes

It would help the business of Congress enormously if, wherever possible, motions could be formally seconded, and if replies to questions and debates were kept to a minimum.

The Standing Orders Committee draws Delegates' attention to the rostrum and asks speakers to be ready by the rostrum when it is their turn to speak. Chairs will be provided at the front of the hall for speakers awaiting their turn.

Questions on Balance Sheet and Auditors' Report

Questions on the Balance Sheet and Auditors' Report must be submitted in writing to alison.turtle@gmb.org.uk by no later than 5.30 pm on Monday 9 June.

Motions Out of Order

The Standing Orders Committee has ruled that the following Motions are Out of Order for the reasons specified:

Motions

Motion 1 Standing Orders Committee Reserved Places

The Motion would require amendments to GMB Rules since representation at Congress and the SOC are established under Rules 8 and 9. Rule Amendments have not been submitted.

Motion 10 End "Unspecified Hours" Contracts – We must practice what we preach

The Motion relates to the terms and conditions of GMB employees, contrary to the 1985 Congress Special Motion (reproduced in the Guidelines for Congress Business) which reserves such matters to the CEC.

Motion 31 Assistant Branch Secretary Roles

The Motion would require an amendment to GMB Rules since Branch Officer positions are established under Rules 18 and 35. Rule Amendments have not been submitted.

Motion 32 Reinstate the Branch Commission

The Motion would require an amendment to GMB Rules since payments to branches are established under Rule 34. A Rule amendment has not been submitted.

Motion 44 Debt Support for Members

The Motion would require an amendment to GMB Rules since benefits are established under Rules 48 – 57. A Rule Amendment has not been submitted.

Motion 136 Uber Drivers Pay

The Motion relates to an industrial issue which is specific to the members in UBER which should be considered by the membership in UBER only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for UBER.

Motion 137 Stop Rolled Up Holiday Pay

The Motion relates to an industrial issue which is specific to the members in UBER which should be considered by the membership in UBER only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for UBER.

Motion 152 British Medical Association

The Motion relates to an industrial issue which is specific to the members in the BMA which should be considered by the membership in the BMA only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for the BMA.

Motion 166 End Unfair Discrimination Against Ambulance Workers

The Motion relates to an issue specific to the members in the Ambulance Service which should be considered by the membership in the Ambulance Service and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for the Ambulance Service including the National Ambulance Committee and the NHS Staff Council.

Motion 181 Equal Annual Leave Across Pays Grade

The Motion relates to issues that are specific to the members in local government which should be considered by the members in local government only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for local government including the NJC.

Motion 182 Single Item Pay Negotiations for Higher Education

The Motion relates to issues that are specific to the members in Higher Education which should be considered by the members in Higher Education only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with

by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for Higher Education

Motion 185 NHS Lone Working Staff

The Motion relates to an issue that is specific to the members in the NHS Community and Healthcare areas which ought to be dealt with by the members in those areas only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for the NHS Community and Healthcare areas.

Motion 188 NHS Sickness and Absence Policy – NHS Trusts

The Motion relates to an issue which is specific to the members in NHS Trusts which ought to be dealt with by the members in those areas only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for NHS Trusts.

Motion 190 Subsidised Lunchtime for Teaching Assistants and Support Staff

The Motion relates to an issue which is specific to the members working as Teaching Assistants and Support Staff which ought to be dealt with by the members in those positions only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for members working as Teaching Assistants and Support Staff.

Motion 193 Pandemic Recognition for All Staff

The Motion relates to an issue which is specific to members in the NHS which ought to be dealt with by the members in the NHS only and is not a policy matter for Congress. The Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is through the existing GMB industrial structures for the NHS.

RA 308

The proposed Rule Amendment to Rule 13 would leave Rule 13 deficient since it refers to the President and Rule 13 relates to the Vice-President.

RA 309

The proposed Rule Amendment to Rule 13 would leave Rule 13 deficient since it refers to the President and Rule 13 relates to the Vice-President.

RA 310

The proposed Rule Amendment to Rule 13 would leave Rule 13 deficient since it refers to the President and Rule 13 relates to the Vice-President.

Motions in line with Existing Policy

In accordance with recommendation 14 of the “Framework for the Future of GMB: Moving Forward” CEC Special Report endorsed by Congress 2007, the CEC has advised the Standing Orders Committee about those Motions which are in line with existing GMB policy. The CEC Report on “Existing Policy Motions” printed in the Final Agenda explains when and how existing policy was established in each case. The Standing Orders Committee has accepted the

advice and is therefore recommending to Congress that the following Motions be put to Congress for endorsement without the need for debate:

Motion 72 – Equality Rights – London

Motion 87 – Support for Workers Experiencing Miscarriage and Pregnancy Loss – London

Motion 88 – Paid Bereavement Leave for Loss of Pregnancy During the First 23 Weeks – Wales & South West

Motion 94 – Mental Health illness Reporting HSE – Midlands

Motion 100 – Extreme Temperatures in the Workplace – London

Motion 108 – Justice for 1950s Women – State Pension Age Changes – Wales & South West

Motion 110 - Stop the Rising Pension Age – London

Motion 116 – Special Guardianship Order Statutory Provisions – Midlands

Motion 120 – Calling on Labour to update Redundancy Matrix – Wales and South West

Motion 165 Re - introduction of School Support Staff Negotiating Body – London

Motion 169 - School Support Staff – North West & Irish

Motion 186 NHS' Work-related Stress and Work-related Injury – GMB Scotland

Motion 197 – National Living Wage Rights for Working People aged over 18 – London

Motion 239 - Dignity when Travelling – GMB Scotland

Motion 256 – Young Persons Union Education– North west & Irish

Composite Motions

Agreement has been reached on the Composite Motions printed in the Final Agenda.

Mobile Phones

If mobile phones are brought into the Congress Hall, they must be switched off at all times when Congress is in session.

Film Cameras

The Standing Orders Committee has given permission for film cameras to be used in the Conference Hall. The Committee has been assured that filming will be carried out with no interference to Delegates.

DVDs, Videos etc

Requests to play DVDs, videos, etc should be submitted to the Standing Orders Committee for approval prior to being shown at Congress.

Bucket Collections

Requests for permission to hold Bucket Collections should be submitted in writing to the Committee by 11 am on the first morning session of Congress. (It is a term of Exhibitors' agreements with GMB that they will not request permission to hold a collection.) Requests must be submitted in writing by the Regional Secretary and must have the support of the Regional Delegation. Priority will be given to requests for bucket collections which concern trade union or related issues. Where permission is granted, those requesting the collection must organise, count and bank the collection, if necessary, liaising with the Congress office for support from Congress Stewards. They must then notify the Congress office of the amount collected, so that a report of the position can be made by the SOC to Congress.

In the normal course of events the total number of bucket collections to be authorised by the SOC will be limited to a maximum of 3, except in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances at the discretion of the President. The SOC will limit consideration of requests for bucket collections to a maximum of 1 per Region, except in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances.

By agreement reached at Congress 96, Regional Committees will each contribute a further sum to the national Congress gift. So permission will not be granted for a collection to augment the Congress gift

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

1. In accordance with the provisions of Rule 12 and Rule 13, nominations to elect a President and a Vice-President must be received by the General Secretary by the Monday of the week before Congress i.e. by Monday 2 June 2025. In the event of a contested election for President and/or Vice-President, the Committee recommends the following procedure.

2. The General Secretary will announce the names of the candidates to Congress at the close of business on the afternoon of Monday 9 June.

3. On Tuesday 10 June each candidate will be entitled to make an election address to Congress, prior to the distribution of ballot papers. The number of minutes allowed for an election address will be up to 5 minutes.

4. Ballot papers will be prepared under the supervision of the Standing Orders Committee. At 11 am on the morning of Tuesday 10 June, the General Member Auditors will deliver to each Regional Secretary the envelope containing the ballot papers for lay delegates of the Region and will deliver to the General Secretary the envelope containing the ballot papers for Central

Executive Council members. Other non-voting delegates are not entitled to vote in this election. The Regional Secretary will issue a ballot paper to each delegate entitled to vote. The General Secretary, via the Executive Officer, will issue a ballot paper to each Central Executive Council member entitled to vote.

5. If any delegate arrives late, their Regional Secretary should accompany the delegate to the General Member Auditors and request a ballot paper. If any Central Executive Council member arrives late the Executive Officer should accompany the Central Executive Council Member to the General Member Auditors and request a ballot paper.

6. Each delegate and Central Executive Council member is entitled to place their ballot paper in one of the ballot boxes at the front of the hall. Tellers are not responsible for collecting ballot papers in this election.

7. Voting will close at 3.30 pm on Tuesday 10 June, at which time the General Member Auditors will take the ballot papers and count the votes. They should report the result to Congress at the end of the afternoon session on the same day.

THE PRESIDENT: I now call on Karen Dudley, Chair of the SOC to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1 which is on page 22 of your Final Agenda.

THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (Karen Dudley, London): I am formally moving SOC Report No. 1. President, Congress you will find a copy of the SOC Report No. 1 in your Final Agenda starting at page 22. I formally move adoption of that report and in doing so would colleagues please note the longstanding guidelines for Congress business on page 17 of your Final Agenda. This will help all of you, especially new delegates, in understanding the procedures and the guidelines that the President and the SOC work to. A copy of the SOC report on behalf of the SOC will be issued to delegates later today and any further SOC reports will be issued to delegates during the course of the week. I hope this will assist everyone in being able to keep track of decisions such as withdrawn motions.

Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been informed that a number of motions and rule amendments have been withdrawn since the printing the Final Agenda and I will read these out now and we will issue a list later today to so that you can keep track on the agenda. There are a number and I will deal with them region by region to save repetition.

The list of withdrawn motions and rule amendments. From London Region: Motion 68, Engagement with Anti-Fascist Groups, Motion 159, Complaints Against School Support Staff, Motion 187, National Health Service, Motion 214, Threat to British Steel: Support for a Steel Alternative Industry, Motion 233, Workers Agenda: Keeping our Government Accountable, Motion 235, Heating for the Elderly and the Vulnerable by Capping Payments, Motion 259, Increase for Thames Water Customer Bills, Motion 282, Winter Fuel Allowance, Motion 287, International Trade and the EU, Motion 289, Gaza Israel and the Middle East, Motion 291, Genocide in Gaza, Motion 292, Trade Union Support for Palestine, Rule Amendment 297, Rule Amendment 318, Rule Amendment 321, Rule Amendment 328, Rule Amendment 334, Rule Amendment 335 and Rule Amendment 338.

Midlands Region: Motion 1, Standing Orders Committee Reserved Places, Motion 212, Steel Council, Motion 213, Steel Council - Scunthorpe Port Talbot, Motion 220, Labour Party Conference, Motion 230 Repeal Enclosure Acts, Motion 265, Call for Action on Global Climate Emergency.

North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region: Motion 14, Environmental Matters to the

Standard Agenda, Motion 95, Work-Related Stress to be an Industrial Industry if Proven, Motion 172, Rebuild the NHS, Motion 217, GMB and the Labour Government. Rule Amendment 301.

North West & Irish Region: Motion 32, Reinstate the 10% Branch Commission, Motion 59, Mandatory Yearly EDI Training for all GMB Representatives, Convenors and Officers, Motion 60, Mandatory Bi-Annual Equality, Diversity Inclusion (EDI) for Every Staff Member and Representatives of the GMB, Motion 67, Combatting Islamophobia and Muslim Hate, Motion 224, Stopping Reform UK, Motion 264, Transition, Rule Amendment 322, Rule Amendment 324, GMB Scotland: Rule Amendment 320.

Southern Region: Motion 8, Restoring Dignity, Motion 10, End “Unspecified Hours” Contracts - We Must Practise What we Preach, Motion 31, Assistant Branch Secretary Roles, Motion 70, Young Workers, Motion 181, Equal Annual Leave Across Pay Grades, Motion 182, Single Item Pay Negotiations for Higher Education, Motion 218, Change in Political Landscape, Motion 296, Veto Power No More - Empower the General Assembly, Rule Amendment 304, Rule Amendment 305, Rule Amendment 306, Rule Amendment 307, Rule Amendment 308, Rule Amendment 309, Rule Amendment 310, Rule Amendment 312, Rule Amendment 313, Rule Amendment 314, Rule Amendment 326, Rule Amendment 332.

Wales & South West Region: Motion 281, Loss of Winter Fuel Payments, Motion 290, Gaza, Israel and the Middle East.

Composite Motion 12 and Composite Motion 13 are withdrawn. Would Congress delegates please note if any further Congress motions are to be withdrawn during the week please advise your Regional Secretary who in turn can inform the SOC.

Agreed Composite Motions. The SOC so would like to thank delegates and their Regional Secretaries for agreeing now 14 Composite Motions that also appear in your Final Agenda, starting from page 164. Congress, there are four agreed composite motions where more than two regions are involved. They are Composite 2, Comprehensive Mental Health and Welfare Support for GMB Representatives. Composite 3, GMB Reps Induction Day and Training, Composite 5, Better Workplace Rights and Protection for Workers Undergoing IVF and Fertility Treatment. Composite 8, Number of Private Hire Vehicle Licence, National Standards and the De-Regulation Impact on Private Hire and Hackney Trade.

The SOC is recommending that each of the regions, besides the movers and seconders in those composites should still have the opportunity to speak on the composite if they so wish, this is by way of an exception to Motion 8, Speakers on Motions, carried at Congress in 2018, which limits the speakers to the mover and seconder where a motion is unopposed.

Existing policy motions. Congress, in accordance with Congress decisions adopted since 2008, the SOC is recommending that motions which are existing policies are endorsed by Congress without the need for debate, following advice from the CEC on

the particular motions in question. The existing policy motions are listed in SOC Report No. 1 at page 24 of your Final Agenda.

There is one further motion to be included in the list of existing policy motions and that is motion 90, 100% Paternity Pay from London Region. You may also find it helpful to refer to the detailed report from the CEC which is at page 183 of your Final Agenda. The letters “EP” also appear by the side of each such motion in the Final Agenda.

Motion and rule amendments out of order. Congress, the SOC has ruled that there are nine motions remaining on the agenda that are out of order for debate. First, there is one motion that would require a rule amendment to give effect to the provisions but no rule amendment has been submitted. This is Motion 44, Debt Support for Members. Second, there are eight motions which are about industrial strategy and are matters for the GMB members in those areas and the relevant GMB committees and are not policy matters for Congress.

They are: Motion 136, Uber Drivers Pay, Motion 137, Stop Rolled up Holiday Pay, Motion 152, British Medical Association, Motion 166, End Unfair Discrimination Against Ambulance Workers, Motion 185, NHS Lone Working Staff, Motion 188, Sickness and Absence Policy NHS Trust, Motion 190, Subsidised Lunch Time for Teaching Assistants and Support Staff, and Motion 193, Pandemic Recognition for All.

Further details of the out of order motions which have not been withdrawn are contained in your Final Agenda at page 22. President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 1 (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Is there any delegate who wishes to speak on any of the SOC's recommendations? Can you make sure you clearly say which motion or rule amendment you are wanting to reference back, please.

CATHY HOLLAND (London): Morning President, Congress, I am speaking on Motion 185. While I welcome the CEC statement on the NHS, it does not address many staff concerns on the safety of lone working in the community. From ambulance workers, to mental health workers and nurses who work in the community, for patient and worker protection, we would welcome body-worn cameras that would help with disputes between workers and patients. Both staff and patients please support this motion for debating.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. Karen, you have the right to respond.

THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (Karen Dudley, London): President Congress responding to the challenge from SOC Report No. 1 on Motion 185 NHS Lone Working Staff. Motion 185 is out of order because it deals with the use of body cameras for NHS staff working in the community which should be dealt with solely by the members in those areas through their industrial structures and not through Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Are you coming to make a reference back as well? Can you make clear what rule or amendment you want referenced back.

JOHN WOOD (London): Morning, Congress. I am contesting No. 44 because our members are leaving us. They are in debt and then they come back to us, but we cannot only give them advice, we cannot support them in a disciplinary, so I would like to see this going forward. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Could you repeat for me which one it is you are supporting?

JOHN WOOD: Motion 44. (*Applause*)

THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (Karen Dudley, London): Again Motion 44 - Debt Support for Members - is out of order because it proposes a new benefit for members but does not put forward a rule amendment and benefits are set out in rules 48 to 57.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Anybody else from any other? In that case we have got the two motions that have been asked to be referenced back. I will take a vote on each one of those. All those in favour of Motion 185 being referenced back and being put back into the debate, please show? All those against? I think that is put back in. Thank you.

Then Motion 44, all those in favour of it being put back into the debate please show? Then all those against? That one is lost. Thank you very much.

*Motion 44 was **LOST**.*

I now put the rest of the SOC report to Congress. All those in favour the SOC Report No. 1, please show. Thank you. Anyone against?

*SOC Report No.1 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Thank you, Barry. Thank you, Congress. These are the rules you have adopted for the conduct of the Congress for the coming week.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN (Malcolm Sage): Colleagues, it gives me great pleasure to call on our President Barbara Plant to address Congress. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Friends, colleagues comrades, as always it is an incredible privilege to stand here as your GMB National President. It is an amazing role where I get to represent you and hundreds of thousands of wonderful GMB members, speaking at rallies and marches, meeting with leaders and senior politicians. But no matter where I find myself I never forget who I am and why I am here. I am from south London, a long-serving teaching assistant: a proud GMB member. And just like you, the best of our union, I fight every day to deliver our mission to make work better for our members.

One of the many wonderful things that I get to do as President is open our annual gathering, so on behalf of everyone in our great union, welcome to GMB Congress 2025 (*Applause and cheers*) There are so many wonderful people in this room: GMB people who have travelled the length and breadth of the UK and Ireland. As delegates

we have the honour of being sent to Brighton to represent GMB members, the hard-working women and men who come together in this great union in search of a better world of work. That is a very special thing. If you are a new delegate, you are about to experience a fascinating few days. I am sure you are as excited to be here as I am. It is my sixth Congress as President, and the buzz of being with everyone and driving our union forward is as fresh today as it was when I first took the helm. I suspect you may be a little bit nervous at the thought of making a speech. Well do not worry we all are, no matter how long we have been coming.

Be assured we are a welcoming, respectful, inclusive union and Congress is a perfect demonstration of what makes us great. To everyone here let's show - I know we have done it already - our new delegates how welcome they are in our GMB family.

(Applause)

And to everyone who has been before I simply say: thank you. Thank you for your continued commitment. Thank you for your activism. Thank you for being the very best of GMB. Congress is about debate, opinion, policy, but it is also where we come together as colleagues and leave as lifetime friends. This year Congress is taking place during Eid and I want to say a big thank you and very best wishes to our Muslim sisters and brothers who are here at this special time.

Friends, it has only been a couple of years since our last visit to the Sussex seaside but much has changed in the world. The Tories have been kicked out of power. *(Applause)* You are not going to clap the next bit. Donald Trump is back in the White House. But the most earth-shattering news is that my beloved Crystal Palace won the FA Cup.

Great news for us Palace fans but not something that will go down too well in this town.
Sorry, I had to get that into my speech.

Since Congress last year I have travelled around the UK to visit workplaces, talked to members and taken part in GMB events. I have seen the changes our people are dealing with. I hear it in their stories: increasing pressures, more demands, less time, greater responsibilities. More often than not without better pay or improved living standards.

The world of work is changing but our battles remain constant. In North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region I met with our reps and members working at the Renault VO factory in Northumberland, a company which makes high-quality plastic films and products. Outside the council building in Birmingham I stood alongside the amazing GMB women striking for equal pay. I witnessed firsthand their rage but also the courage and inspiring dignity of their action. My congratulations go to everyone in Midlands Region for what they are achieving here. (*Applause*)

Meeting Labour Party staff who are members of London Region was insightful. London Region has done so much to recruit and organise people who are just like our members everywhere: concerned about pay, conditions, job security. Well done London Region for building such a strong branch. (*Applause*)

Last November I was invited to attend the end of year GMB Scotland Regional Committee meeting to hear firsthand the views of our lay leaders. In my region Southern, I have kept very much in touch with support staff, visiting and recruiting members in schools. Southern has a huge school support staff membership and great

credit goes to all the team for their work. (*Applause*) It was in Southern Region that I spent time last July at the Tolpuddle Festival, where I represented GMB in laying a wreath in memory of the trade union martyrs, who fought for their rights in the toughest of times. In Wales & South West I joined their Equality Conference and their recent Women's Conference. Both were great learning opportunities for members who attended. We all came away from the Equality Conference having learned some basic sign language. In North West & Irish Region it was a privilege to meet so many inspirational women in our union on the Women in Leadership programme.

Being President means you are often GMB's ambassador and the public face of our great union. In the last year alone this has taken me to Tolpuddle, to Cradley Heath and the Chainmakers' Festival, the Durham Miners' Gala and many more events. I have spoken in solidarity with Ukraine on the anniversary of the Russian invasion and I have been GMB's voice at key moments, at TUC Congress, Labour Party Conference, in Parliament, or direct to Cabinet Members. At all times I never forget why I am there - for GMB members. (*Applause*)

Congress, it is up to us to organise, campaign and assert our own power, to make work better, but we also know what it is like when the political wind is blowing hard against us. Congress, this is the first GMB Congress under a Labour Government since 2009. Our members suffered hugely under the Tories. Their anti-union laws, austerity, the cost-of-living crisis, partying the night away in No. 10 while GMB members were risking and some losing their lives during Covid.

We voted for change. The Employment Rights Bill and the restoration of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body are huge. I sat on the SSSNB when it was first set up in 2009 before its cancellation by Tory Michael Gove. I am so proud that because of efforts by GMB and sister unions in the movement the SSSNB is back under a Labour Government. (*Applause*) There is also good news on many other areas too, not least an end to the disgusting practice of fire and re-hire, and that is something to celebrate. (*Applause*)

But we also need to be honest with Labour. We are not happy with other things you are doing. The Winter Fuel Allowance, failing WASPI women, cutting welfare support. We voted for change and Labour needs to deliver it. (*Applause*) The country is desperate for hope. Last year we saw the worse of what happens when hate runs free: riots, violence, criminality, targeting people from elsewhere, people who looked a certain way, a different colour, different race, different religion. We will challenge those who spread dismay and division. We will organise, show unity, offer a better way together our hope will beat their hate. (*Applause*)

Our union has faced our own issues. We have shown the courage to lead, the courage to change. The last seven years have seen some of the most challenging times in our history. The Monaghan Report meant we had to take a long hard look at our ourselves. The Henry Report, dormant since 2002, showed that we had to face some hard realities. I am proud it is our generation of GMB that has come together to face these challenges. And I pay tribute to the members of the current and past CEC for their courage and commitment, for taking the tough and necessary decisions that have saved our union and put us on the right path for the future. And great credit too must go to Gary as our

General Secretary and the senior leadership team for standing up to the task that we have set them (*Applause*)

There is more to do. The fight for better never stops but let's recognise how far we have come. We are a growing union again. We are a campaigning union again. We are a winning union again. (*Applause*) After last year's Congress, delegates gave their feedback. Here are just some of their comments. "It was a brilliant experience and I feel really involved in the union", "My overall experience of the whole week was far beyond anything I could have imagined", "Everyone was friendly", "Just like being a member of a family".

Congress, during this week let's show the world we are at our dynamic energetic best, where we all do our bit for GMB members, where your feedback will be even better than last year. Together we have done so much. We are a better stronger union. Let's keep doing what is working. Friends, enjoy Congress 2025. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Announcements

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, before we begin our first debate I would like to explain a few points of procedure. Please listen carefully. To save time I will take motions in groups. Your session programme will show the grouping. If you are speaking on any of these motions, you must register the number on your delegate pass at the desk in the front before going to the chairs here in front of the rostrum ready to speak. Please make sure you do this every time you speak. We will have changeovers of staff at that desk. I will call movers and seconders and in line with Motion 8 carried at Congress 2018, I

will not be calling for additional supporting speakers on motions, only delegates who want to speak in opposition.

If you are moving a motion without the support of your region, you must declare it at the beginning of your moving speech.

Where the CEC is supporting a motion I will advise Congress. Where the CEC has any other position, a member of the CEC will give the reasons for that decision. We will then move to a vote of all the motions in that group either as one or individually.

I will make sure to repeat this throughout the week as I know it is a lot to take in, especially for first-time delegates. But when voting, you are voting for the motion, not the CEC stance. The CEC stance advises Congress on how it may wish to vote. For example, if the CEC is to support a motion, it is advising Congress to vote for the motion. Or, if the CEC stance is to oppose a motion, it is advising Congress to vote against the motion. On Special Reports and Statements, the CEC will have moving and seconding speakers. I will then invite one delegate from each region to speak on the report or statement at that time.

Motions relating to Special Reports or Statements that remain on the agenda will be debated. I will advise Congress on the voting process during those sessions.

When it comes to moving and seconding your motions, delegates will see a light on the right-hand side of the rostrum when they speak. When the light turns yellow this means that delegates have 30 seconds left to finish their speech. After those 30 seconds the

light will turn red and if you are still speaking when the light turns red, you will be encouraged to wrap up or will be cut off. Most importantly practise your speeches, keep to time, and have fun!

Finally, could I remind Congress that as you have voted in SOC Report No. 1 all existing policy motions will be carried without debate, and those motions that are out of order will not be debated.

Union Organisation: Congress & General

THE PRESIDENT: We will now be debating our first motions of the week on Union Organisation: Congress & General. Could the movers and seconders please be ready for Motions 6, 11, 13 and 14? Sorry, there is no 14. My apologies. Could I ask for the mover of Motion 6, please.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SECRETARIES' RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

MOTION 6

6. REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SECRETARIES' RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

This Congress is concerned that there isn't a clear process in place for the recruitment of Regional and National Secretaries following the Congress 2015 approved process. We note with serious concerns that the CEC's review of the process following the Monaghan Report remains outstanding after so many months with no completion date set. This has therefore created a two-

tier system with an approved Congress process (2015) in place and an incomplete one being used to dilute/fudge the process.

We therefore call;

1. On Congress to ensure that the GMB continues to use the approved Congress 2015 recruitment process.
2. That the HR review of the process should involve Regions and their views taken into account.
3. That the review completion date be set as a priority to within 3 to 6 months of this Congress and reported back through the Finance and General Purposes Sub Committee to CEC, and
4. That a regular update item on progress be put on the CEC's Agenda as a standing item within the review period, and until it is completed and ratified/approved by the CEC accordingly.

X98 LFB BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Referred)

CHARLES ADJE (Southern): Good morning, Congress. The GS looks surprised. Of course, we will continue dialogue. President, Congress I am moving Motion 6, Regional and National Secretaries' Recruitment and Appointment Process. Comrades, as you will be aware or have noticed on the Final Agenda of Congress, the Regional Secretary's position is listed as interim. This is because we found ourselves as a union without a proper process in place, as the one approved by Congress in 2015 has either been changed or diluted subsequently, in Southern Region's opinion. The CEC commissioned a review of the process by HR in either 2022 or '23. The review appears to have drifted with no definite date for its completion. Therefore, there is ambiguity on which process to be followed, which has led again in Southern Region's opinion to the situation we find ourselves in, where the Monaghan Report and the fact that a light-touch review is being carried out, but our fear is that it may not necessarily deal with

the issues or points outlined in the motion. We therefore obviously need some guarantees that in terms of the points in the motion this would be looked at with a clear time-frame set out for completion of the HR review as it is still ongoing for some years now. I would like to place our thanks to London Region for their support and assistance with the current interim arrangements. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charles. Secunder?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Seconding Motion 6. This is really quite simple, Congress. In the bad old days in this union regions selected their own Regional Secretaries with no input from anyone else. Some of the Regional Secretaries recruited were brilliant, many of them were very good, one or two wee duffers but all of them were men. When that was reviewed in 2015 at the Women's Taskforce Report at the Dublin Congress, it brought in an improvement that the selection panel would be half from the region and half from the CEC. That improved things. We have now got a load of brilliant women Regional Secretaries, and that is progress.

But there is an anomaly that obviously the CEC people should not come from the same region. What we are looking to in the review is if the President comes from your own region, you can end up with four from your own region and two from the CEC not from the region. This is certainly no criticism of Barbara and it is no criticism of Gary. This is just an opportunity for an improvement, as we believe the CEC people should not be from the region. This is an opportunity for improvement. Thank you to Gary and to London Region in helping Southern Region through the difficult times we have had. We have had some difficult conversations but, as always with the GMB, we all work

together, we speak frankly, but we all have the same aim, which is to work for our members and to get the best result for our union. Please support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Andy. Mover of Motion 11, please. That is Southern Region again. Motion 11 will fall if there is nobody to speak on it.

RESOURCES FOR A GROWING UNION

MOTION 11

11. RESOURCES FOR A GROWING UNION

As a growing Union we believe there are not adequate resources (staffing levels) for the Union to complete this work, this is not just in Education. Our National Race Team we believe is under resourced and for the Union to be Anti-Racist would need further resources to support the work. We are calling on the Union to consider the above and to review the aim and objectives along with the staffing levels to support the growth of the Union

L26 RICHMOND AND WANDSWORTH BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Fell)

THE PRESIDENT: Okay, that falls. Mover from Southern Region for Motion 13, please?

INCREASE IN ACTIVIST E-MAIL STORAGE CAPACITY

MOTION 13

13. INCREASE IN ACTIVIST EMAIL STORAGE CAPACITY

This Congress recognises the critical role that branch secretaries play in serving GMB members through effective communication and administrative efficiency. Notes that for several years,

branch secretaries have relied on 2GB email accounts provided by the union for handling their communications. Historically, when most correspondence was sent via post, this capacity may have been sufficient. However, the demands of modern branch communications have shifted significantly, with approximately 98% of correspondence now conducted via email. This includes the sending and receiving of large digital documents, such as case files, member updates, and reports.

Further notes that local authorities and public sector employers often provide employees with email storage capacities of up to 100GB, highlighting the outdated nature of the 2GB limit imposed on branch secretaries.

Believes that the current 2GB mailbox size is insufficient, causing regular mailbox congestion and requiring branch secretaries to spend valuable time clearing space instead of focusing on supporting and representing members. This inefficiency diverts attention from core duties and affects overall productivity.

Resolves to:

1. Instruct the union to review the current mailbox storage provision and investigate upgrading the storage capacity of activist email accounts to reflect current and future communication needs.
2. Ensure that the storage upgrade is proportionate to the role's requirements, considering the increased reliance on electronic communication.
3. Develop a clear timeline and provide updates to branches on progress to ensure transparency in the implementation process.

M27 MERTON BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Carried)

MARZENA ZBOROWSKA HUGGETT (Southern): Good morning President. Good morning Congress. Motion 13 - Increase in Activist E-mail Storage Capacity. Congress. I raise this today as the mover of this motion not just on behalf of my branch and region but on behalf of every dedicated activist who serves this union. We are expected to be responsive. We are expected to organise. We are expected to support members, often at a moment's notice, and yet we are doing this vital work with e-mail accounts which have just two gigabytes of storage. That is not enough to hold the files for a few grievances or disciplinary cases. To put that into perspective, a free Gmail or Outlook account gives you 15 gigabytes for free. Many of our employers like councils give their staff 100 gigabytes or more. We as GMB activists are working with 2 gigabytes.

Colleagues, let me tell you what that means in practice. It means spending up to two hours every week clearing out old e-mails, deleting attachments, backing things up manually, trying not to lose important member case files in the process. That is two hours I could spend representing a member. That time should be spent preparing for negotiations or checking in on reps. Instead it is being wasted on digital admin just to make space for one more incoming grievance.

This is not just inconvenient; this is demoralising and frustrating. What is more it reflects an outdated view of how we work. A few years ago most of our communication was done by post. Letters were sent, documents filed in ring binders and e-mails were secondary, but now 99% of our communications are via e-mail. It is our primary tool, our digital workplace, and if the union expect us to do a professional job - and we do - it must provide professional tools.

We are not asking for the world. We are asking for a realistic modern functioning e-mail system with adequate storage, something that meets the needs of today, not 10 years ago. Congress, we are volunteers. Let me repeat that. We are volunteers! We give our time freely to support members when they need us most. We do not ask for much but we do need the basics to be in place so that we can do our job well.

So today I ask Congress to support this motion, to acknowledge that 2 gigabytes is not good enough, to recognise the impact this has on your fellow activists, and to move forward technologically and practically by investing in the tools that allow us to serve members more effectively. Support this motion; support your activists; support your volunteers! Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Marzena. Secunder?

JOHN INOKOBA (Southern): Madam President, fellow delegates, today I stand before you to second the motion that was just read; to address an issue that affects our daily operation as a union representative and by extension, the quality of service we provide to our members. I am speaking about the urgent need for increased memory storage capacity for your union representatives. The role of communication is key and our representatives are the backbone of our union. Handling a vast amount of e-mail every day these e-mails are not just simple messages, they are the lifeblood of our operation. They include vital communication with members, documents and grievances in particular.

These are the issues that we are facing. One of the problems that we are having with e-mail is that we receive e-mail from employers, we receive e-mail from the region, and we also receive the cc'd e-mail from our members and we have to store this information. Given that they come with so many attachments, it is very difficult for us to scrutinise, and when a vital document is being left out, it is also a data protection issue because we cannot find it. I am just urging everybody to support this motion. Thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, John. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? Clearly say which one it is you are speaking in opposition to, please.

CIORSTADH REICHLE (GMB Scotland): Chair, Congress, speaking against Motion 6. Congress, the Women's Taskforce introduced changes to the election of regional secretaries and national officers. Since then our union has made incredible progress in putting in a fairer process resulting in the appointment of women to leadership roles across the country, including Scotland, where we have our first female Scotland Secretary. Boss. *(Applause)* We should not under-state this achievement but celebrate it. Don't understate it; celebrate it! This demonstrates that we have not only understood the lessons of the Monaghan Report but acted upon them.

To be clear, the process of appointments currently in place was in direct response to the recommendations of our Women's Task Force. It is disappointing to read the motion claims the current process is diluted or fudged, especially when it is also overseen by an external independent barrister. This is robust and fair. The previous process was outdated and not in keeping with the vision of a modern and fair union we aspire to

build. It would not be reasonable for our union to claim to have understood and acted upon the findings of the Monaghan Report and then revert back.

Congress, finalising the new process is important work and it requires time to do so correctly. We should not try to rush it but have confidence that it is being given the attention it deserves. Congress, please oppose the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Charles, you do get the right of reply.

CHARLES ADJE: President, Congress, I am responding to the comments made by Scotland. No one is saying that the 2015 system is broken. But if as she claims it is working okay why did the CEC commission a review? We are representatives. We represent people in the workplace. We put management under tremendous pressure. Why has it taken two or three years to review; a review that has been commissioned by the CEC. That is what we are calling for - that it should be dealt with as quickly as possible. So if it ain't broken why fix it? You could ask yourself the question, why did the CEC ask for an HR review. We are not saying Monaghan is broken. We are not saying that at all. If the system is working, why have we got this stalemate in my region? Why? Yes, we have women regional secretaries. That is fantastic and we welcome that. We are not saying that there is a problem with Monaghan. We are saying why has it taken so long to review and to have a proper system in place. The system is clearly broken somewhere and that is why the CEC has asked for a review. I think the question that needs to be asked is, why has it taken HR up to now not to complete a review? You would not accept it in your workplaces if management was doing that so why should we accept it in our regions? Again our thanks to London Region and

obviously the General Secretary for ensuring that Southern Region has something in place. That is what we are talking about, so we should be clear in terms of the points in the motion. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Charles. (*Applause*) Can I ask Linda Carr-Pollock from the CEC to give the CEC response, please?

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK: I am speaking on behalf of the CEC responding with our stances to Motions 6 and 13.

On Motion 6, Regional and National Secretaries' Recruitment and Appointment Process from Southern Region, the CEC is asking that the region accepts reference back. We have implemented Monaghan and recommendations from the women's Project 2015 Congress Report and we want to refer this motion to review additional learnings in the years since we adopted the Monaghan Report, taking into consideration the views in the motion. Congress heard debated and voted on three reports to Congress on our progress on Monaghan in the years to 2021, 2022 and 2023. In addition Karon Monaghan is currently conducting a review of progress and implementation.

On Motion 13 - Increase in Activist E-mail Storage Capacity - the CEC is asking for this motion to be withdrawn. We recognise the importance of storing member documents for cases and are sympathetic to the issues raised in the motion. Presently we are unable to extend the capacity of the mail box without adding significant costs on to our union. Activists who have GMB accounts must make use of their One Drive as efficiently as possible and also contact the IT team should they need any assistance.

Delegates, thank you for the opening debates of this Congress. I will sum up the CEC positions on this set of motions. For Motion 6 we are asking that Southern Region agrees to refer, and to withdraw Motion 13. If the region does not agree, we will ask Congress to oppose the motions. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Linda. Before I go to the vote could I make sure our movers and seconders are down the front for Composite 1 and Motions 18 and 19, please.

Motion 6 - Southern Region do you accept the reference back? (*Agreed*) They do, but because there has been opposition, I will have to put that motion to the vote that you also accept it to be referred back. That is the way it works. All those in favour of referring it, please show. Thank you. All those against? That will be referred. Southern Region, do you agree to withdraw your motion? No. Then obviously the CEC are asking you to oppose. So all those in favour of the motion, please show. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 6 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 13 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of Composite 1, please.

GMB TO BOYCOTT, WITHDRAW AND CLOSE ACCOUNTS ON ‘X’

(FORMERLY KNOWN AS TWITTER) AND OR MEMBERS TO LOBBY THEIR EMPLOYERS TO DO THE SAME

COMPOSITE MOTION 1

(Covering Motions 15, 16 & 17)

15 - GMB TO CLOSE ALL OF IT'S X ACCOUNTS AND FOR MEMBERS TO LOBBY THEIR EMPLOYERS TO DO THE SAME - LONDON REGION

16 - GMB BOYCOTT X (FORMERLY KNOWN AS TWITTER) - LONDON REGION

17 - GMB WITHDRAWAL FROM X - GMB SCOTLAND

C1. GMB TO BOYCOTT, WITHDRAW AND CLOSE ACCOUNTS ON 'X' (FORMERLY KNOWN AS TWITTER) AND FOR MEMBERS TO LOBBY THEIR EMPLOYERS TO DO THE SAME

This Congress, is it time for GMB to stop using the platform X for communications? This Congress condemns the outside interference, the far right provocative and degrading language used by Elon Musk as the owner of X to negatively influence the British political system. The calling of Jess Phillips as a 'rape genocide apologist' is completely unacceptable as is the calling for the USA to 'liberate the UK'. The platform has become ever increasingly the go to platform of the far right since Elon Musk completed the acquisition. During President Trump's inauguration, Musk openly made a clear Nazi salute to the crowd. Any attempts to play this down as anything else, was flawed when days later Mr Musk made a surprised address at the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) campaign launch. A number of public authorities have withdrawn from using Elon Musk's X social media platform as concerns over its role in promoting violence and extreme content persist. It has been used to spread misinformation that sparked riots across Britain and has reinstated British-based accounts that had been banned for extremist content. Musk's

approach fosters hate speech, which is very different from free speech, something GMB does not align itself with. There has been a significant increase in unfiltered and inappropriate content that does not align with GMB views. GMB have fought for equality, protections and much more for over a century so it's time to look to change. Congress calls on GMB to boycott social media platform X (Formerly known as Twitter). Since Elon Musk \$44 billion deal to take over social media Twitter in 2022 and re-branding the platform as X. This motion is that not only for GMB to close their own X accounts and move to another similar platform but for members to lobby their employers to do the same. Many companies, broadcasters, MPs etc have already made this move as a way of showing their unhappiness for the way X is now becoming a platform for far right hate speech. GMB should be part of the exodus from X, to remain on X it lends legitimacy to the far right rhetoric it is currently spreading and we should have no part in it. This Congress calls on GMB to remove itself from X and use alternative platforms to share the good work, we do as a Trade Union. Currently the alternative platform which people who are leaving X are using is 'Bluesky' so Congress is asked to pass this motion that GMB moves to this platform.

As GMB reps we cannot call on or influence our organisations to withdraw from using X when our own union continues to do so. Therefore, whilst we appreciated there may need to be a staggered withdrawal, we call on GMB to cease to use X as a communication platform and seek other communication channels such as Bluesky to use instead.

Moving Region: London

Seconding Region: GMB Scotland

(Referred)

PETE SHRIMPLIN (London): Good morning, Congress. It my first time speaking because I am a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* Thank you. The motion I am bringing you here today is very simple. As a union we must close all our accounts on X and

encourage our employers to do the same. When I wrote this back in January I had no idea it would be such a topical subject for today. But I was also so angry. So angry that Elon Musk had just called Jess Phillips a rape apologist, I was so angry that he called for us people of the UK to be liberated from our own Government, and I was so angry that he called for Tommy Robinson to be released. But since then the situation has only worsened and X has become a cesspit of far-right extremism and Musk is not just tolerating this, he is actively prompting it.

Only last month we marked 80 years since the defeat of fascism in Europe and yet there was Musk speaking at a rally of the AFD, the German far-right extremist party, telling them to move beyond Nazi guilt. Days later in the US he gave not one but two Nazi salutes. A lot of people try to deny what we all saw with our own eyes, and we know exactly what he meant. Elon Musk until a week or so ago was heading up something called DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency, but really it should have been called the Department of Punching Down. The world's richest man was using his wealth and influence not to lift people up but to crush the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalised, and workers like us. He has attacked trade unions, sacked workers with no notice, ignored employment rights entirely.

One story that really hit a chord with me was when Musk ended free and subsidised medication for retired federal workers. A cancer patient in the US, someone on a pension, went from paying \$25 a month to over \$2,000 a month for treatment I receive free in our wonderful NHS for the same cancer. This is callous and obscene. He has promoted hate against any vulnerable or diverse group he can target. I would say minority groups but really we are talking about the global majority here. and his

dismantling of USAID, removing aid from numerous projects worldwide under his direction, has already cost thousands of lives with tens of thousands more projected. That blood is on his hands.

If we stay on X we lend legitimacy to this man and the toxic ideologies he exemplifies and those ideologies are the very opposite of our what our union stands for. If he join this X-odus, we get to remove the metaphorical oxygen he so craves. We also hit him where it hurts, in his wallet. Can I just say for all of you who have so far resisted buying a Tesla: keep up the good work! *(Applause)*

This motion is not about silencing free speech. It is about rejecting hate speech. As a union if we are to stay true to our core values of equality, solidarity and dignity we cannot continue to support a platform owned and operated by a man who is clearly far right and working to dismantle everything movements like ours have fought for. Congress, I urge you to stand up for what is right, support this motion and let's just log off for good. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Pete. Can we have the seconder, please?

ROSS MCARTHUR (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, seconding Composite No. 1. Congress, the spread of misinformation online is clear for us all to see. It has been used as a tool by the far right to spread rumours, racism and discrimination against groups that they want to blame for society's ills. Social media has long been synonymous with misinformation but since the takeover of Twitter (now X) by Elon Musk, it is used by the far right to spread misinformation which has accelerated so

much so that you cannot now spend two minutes on the platforms without coming across discrimination or unreliable content. It has supported the election of far-right figures across the world. It has encouraged violence and abuse against minority groups here at home. This is not free speech. It is hate and a very real threat. This is directly contrary to the values of our union and the trade union movement.

But without a presence on X we will not be able to combat that discrimination and misinformation. We have to be in these spaces to call it out head on. Neither is this a silver bullet. Organising against the far right should always be our priority. As a union, we have to be able to effectively communicate with our membership and to do that we have to be with where our members are so we can tell the members' stories and show workers there is an alternative to hate and counter misinformation. That cannot come at a cost. We cannot continue to indefinitely prop up Elon Musk and the X platform. We should use alternatives like Bluesky. Congress, please support this composite. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ross. Can I now have the mover of Motion 18, please.

SUPPORTING THE E-DISADVANTAGED

MOTION 18

18. SUPPORTING THE E-DISADVANTAGED

This Congress notes that since 2015 over 5000 big name banks have disappeared from our high streets. As this trend continues, millions of vulnerable customers are left with little or no access to their cash. Despite the drive to digital not everyone has access to online banking and the loss of face-to-face services throughout the country adversely impacts the e-disadvantaged. As

financial providers continue to prioritise profit over customers' needs it is now almost impossible to operate financial affairs without technology and those with no or limited access to it are in an increasingly vulnerable position. Parking a car, using a public phone or accessing a secure internet is increasingly difficult without online access to a bank account. The e-disadvantaged people are more likely to become victims of financial crime due to their technological inexperience. If they have outdated software or hardware due to lack of ability, funds, or access to sufficient services. They are not protected by the industry or the government, who have shifted the responsibility for security to the user without ensuring that industry advances have been inclusive and considered. Congress calls upon GMB to support E-Disadvantaged members by not booking venues or hotels, that are necessary to conduct GMB business, that are cashless, or at the very least, make arrangements with the venues/conference halls/hotels to allow them to pay in cash. Many members prefer to use cash, so they can keep an eye on their finances, particularly when they are on Union business.

FIFE PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH

GMB SCOTLAND

(Carried)

ANNETTE DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): I am moving Motion 18 on Supporting the E-Disadvantaged. Congress, who would you say are the e-disadvantaged: the young, the elderly, the disabled person? The answer is all of society. How many have seen their local bank branch close? The only branch in my village closed a number of years ago with all the customers being moved to a branch two miles away, which subsequently closed a year later, forcing all their clients to go to another branch six miles away. Change banks, people say, but they are all the same. They are closing branches left, right and centre. I am lucky I have a free cashline machine in my village. Many do not. Why should we have to pay to access our own money?

Digital banking. How many have been forced to go digital? How many do not have the technology to access it? In this world where smart phones and tablets are prolific, how many can't use them, do not have the funds to purchase them, let alone have the money to pay for internet. The most vulnerable in our society may have access but are unable to use them, leaving them open to financial abuse by someone who is supposed to be supporting by caring for them. And we have all heard the horror stories of financial abuse.

Shopping. All of us need to purchase goods, whether it groceries, clothes or household goods, most of which are now cashless. Those who can afford to go out socially are also facing a cashless society. Some time ago at the TUC in Liverpool the hotel that we were in was totally cashless. Some members who were neurodivergent can only work with cash not cashless to ensure that they are in control with their finances.

I therefore ask Congress to support the e-disadvantaged members by not booking venues and/or hotels where possible that are necessary to conduct GMB business that are cashless. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Annette. Secunder?

CIORSTADH REILCLE (GMB Scotland): I am seconding Motion 18. I rise to speak in strong support of this motion, not out of nostalgia, but out of necessity and fairness. We live in an increasingly digital world. Yes, contactless payments, online banking, mobile apps, they are all convenient for many, but let's be clear, convenience for some

should never mean exclusion for others. The reality is that many of our members, especially those on low incomes and those in rural communities, remain cash reliant, whether by choice or due to lack of access to digital tools. They prefer, or need, to use cash. That preference should not become a barrier to their participation in our union's activities. When we book cashless-only venues or hotels we send a message, intentional or not, that some members are less welcome, that they must conform to a system that does not work for them, rather than us meeting them where they are. That is not solidarity. That is not inclusion.

This motion is about practical support for the e-disadvantaged. It is about making sure all members, regardless of how they pay, can fully engage with our events, meetings and accommodation. And yes, it is about standing up against the creeping normalisation of a cashless society that leaves too many behind. Let's not allow digital convenience to override our core value of fairness, accessibility and inclusion. Let's pass this motion and make a clear statement in the GMB no member is left behind. Congress, I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Mover of Motion 19?

ANURIN BEVAN DAY

MOTION 19

19. ANURIN BEVAN DAY

This Congress notes that Anurin Bevan's spearheading of the National Health Service was to the ultimate benefit of GMB members and the working class as a whole.

The GMB recognises and applauds the contribution that Anurin Bevan made and that it is right

and proper that a day be dedicated to his memory and to further the principles he espoused.

Congress resolves to:-

- Establish the 15 November as “Aneurin Bevan Day” within the GMB
- Hold an event in the name of Aneurin Bevan Day on 15th November 2025
- Promote events commemorating Aneurin Bevan’s life and contribution to the labour movement
- Promote the literature and works of Aneurin Bevan within the GMB

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried

ANTHONY CHOLERTON (London): I am moving Motion 19 - Aneurin Bevan Day. Congress, the greatest achievement of the labour and trade union movement is the founding of the National Health Service, spearheaded by Nye Bevan. It meant that for the first time in our history the poorest among us could receive life-changing medical care free at the point of delivery. The aim of this motion is to establish 15th November as Aneurin Bevan Day within GMB and to hold an event in the name of Nye Bevan on 15th November 2025. We also call for GMB to promote events commemorating his life and his contribution to the labour movement, and to promote the literature and works of Nye Bevan.

It is time for GMB to recognise the incredible work of Nye Bevan and to establish Nye Bevan Day. Celebrating this day not only remembers Nye Bevan’s achievements, it also says to the country that the NHS exists because of the struggle by labour and the trade unions to get better treatment for the poor and working class. The Tories would have us believe that they look after the NHS while the truth is that whenever they are

in power they undermine and underfund the NHS, and try to privatise it through the back door for the benefit of the rich. It is in our interests to promote this great achievement and to make everyone aware that only labour and the trade union movement are the true guardians of the NHS. This motion is supported with a qualification that would involve our sister trade unions. The more Aneurin Bevan Day is celebrated, the better, so we accept this qualification. Congress, please support this motion. I move.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Secunder? (*Formally seconded*) Anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions?

DAWID MAKUCH (Midlands): I am speaking against Composite 1. As much as I understand and agree with everything said about Elon Musk, I just do not believe that we should leave social media platforms. Do not leave it to the far right. We should fight them, not run away from them. If we leave it we are not going to participate in all the conversations that we have on those platforms. When our kids join social media, all they will be exposed to is far-right propaganda. We do not want that so I just think fight the fascists, not run away from them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I am from the great big North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region standing in opposition to composite 1. Congress, I get it. I get the desire to tell Elon Musk to sod right off! I get why colleagues would want to distance themselves from anything associated with him or his pals, but this is not about how much I or you or any of us hate Musk, Trump and their mates. It is about making sure we deliver for our members, and that means using every tool available to

us so we can change lives for the better. Congress, I loved watching Thursday's meltdown between Trump and Musk. Wasn't it brilliant watching two big-headed pillocks trying to take each other down? It had everything you would expect from a Netflix drama and where did it mainly happen? Twitter and hundreds of millions of people watched along, including me. We are a serious union and a union that seeks to win. Not for us posturing simply to make us feel better about ourselves. We leave that to Unison. *(Laughter)* The reality is that journalists, politicians and policymakers are on Twitter. Bluesky and so on are all very well but it does not take away from the fact that the decision-makers are on Twitter and it is our job to influence them. To remove ourselves from a platform that can do that would be letting our members down and taking away our voices.

THE PRESIDENT: Sarah, can you wind up please. *(Applause)*

SARAH YOUNG: Yes, got it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Speaker on Composite 1 Pete, would you like to come back with a right of reply?

PETE SHRIMPLIN: Well I was not expecting to get up here twice on my first Congress. That was great. How do you follow that? Except we do not have the *Sun* so why do we have X? *(Applause)* We are funding hate if we are doing that. We can withdraw from X but if we all start withdrawing then we just leave him shouting in an empty room, and we are no part of that. We really should not be part of supporting a company owned by that man. Simple as that. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Can I now ask Colin Gunter to give the CEC reply.

COLIN GUNTER (CEC): President, Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Composite 1 and Motions 18 and 19.

On Composite 1 the CEC appreciates and shares the concern raised by delegates on this matter. Please be assured that the use of X and other social media services has been discussed at CEC meetings this year. The wider movement is just as concerned as us and GMB is in dialogue with TC unions on the challenges of platforms where hate speech can occur. There is widespread use of social media across the union so any decision on the use of social media must consider the impact on all parts of GMB. This includes national and regional teams, branches, activists and members. This matter should be referred for further consideration, working with staff and branches on how we best implement any changes. For information the union has set up an account on Blue Sky as recommended in the composite.

On Motion 18 - supporting the e-disadvantaged - the CEC support the sentiments of the motion and at Blackpool Winter Gardens where Congress 2026 will be held, is a venue that does not accept cash payments. The question has been raised with our Congress venues such as Brighton and Bournemouth where their policy to be cashless venues will not be waived for GMB Congress. We will seek to make our events as accessible as possible and ask for cash options. The CEC's qualification is that if the union is restricted to not booking Congress venues, hotels and meeting venues that have cashless policies then the number of suitable venues will be massively restricted. There are very

few suitable venues that can accommodate all our Congress requirements at a reasonable cost to the union. If the qualification is not accepted the union would lose deposits all repaid on existing bookings in place for 2027 and 2028 and this would result in having to find venues at very short notice and attempting to rebook alternative suitable venues will come at a largely greater expense with no guarantee of accepting cash should venue policies change.

Finally on Motion 19 - Aneurin Bevan Day - the CEC supports this motion and the call to celebrate the founder of the NHS with two qualifications. Firstly, that Congress allows the CEC to give consideration to what form the event will take and how much that would be in line with budget allocations already agreed for 2025. And secondly, that we should involve sister health unions and the TUC to ensure any event is credible and wider region.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking that Composite 1 be referred and Motions 18 and 19 be supported with the qualifications I have laid out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Colin. Does London and GMB Scotland agree to refer Composite 1? (*Agreed*) Because there was opposition it is like the one before, I am going to ask Congress if they agree to refer back as well. All those in favour, please show. All those against? That is carried. Does Scotland agree the qualification on Motion 18? (*Agreed*) Does London agree on the qualification, I think I heard it in your speech, but I am just checking: does London agree the qualification on Motion 19? (*Agreed*) I put those two to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 18, please show.

Thank you. All those against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 19, please show. Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite Motion 1 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 18 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 19 was **CARRIED**.*

CEC SPECIAL REPORT CEC RULEBOOK AMENDMENTS

GMB Congress 2025 – CEC Rule Amendments

Review of the GMB Rulebook

The review of GMB's Rule Book was begun in 2022 with the aim of updating the union's rules in line with current practice, legal requirements, and the commitment to an organising, campaigning, and activist focused agenda.

The Rule Book Review Group has reported to, and re-acted rule changes at every successive GMB Congress since 2022 and has delivered upon clarifying the union's disciplinary measures; updating GMB's aims and objectives; foregrounding the federal nature of the organisation; restating its industrial focus; and deepening and widening the commitment to organising and campaigning within the workplace.

This year, the Review Group has been focused upon tidying up those rules which pertain to the movement of money around, and the finances of, the union; and bringing those rules which no longer reflect either the employment or internal structures of today's GMB. The Branch Working Party has fed, directly, into its deliberations where they address the functioning of branches and

the adoption of branch plans. As a consequence, those rules brought before Congress in 2025 are of an entirely practical nature.

The Rulebook Review Working Group met on 4 December 2024, 30 March 2025 and 11 April 2025 to discuss and agree amendments to the Rulebook for proposal to the Central Executive Council.

Full report can be accessed here: <https://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/downloads/3382/cec-rule-amendments.pdf>

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we are now moving to debate our first Special Report of the week containing a number of Rule Amendments put forward by the CEC as devised by the Rulebook Review Working Group. This group of lay activists have diligently worked through our rulebook to give you the proposals today. Members of the CEC and the Rulebook Review Working Group will be moving and seconding this report, so can I invite Nathaniel Tetteh and Carol Clarkson to the stage and rostrum, please. Once the report has been moved I will then invite a delegate from each region should regions wish to speak on these.

NATHANIAL TETTEH (CEC): I am a bit vertically challenged so can we put the rostrum down a bit more. Just a bit more, keep going so you can see me! Thank you so much. President, Congress, comrades and friends, I am as nervous as everyone else is, please excuse me. If I do make any mistakes please pull me up on it but I am nervous.

The rule amendments that are brought to you today have been the product of a year's work by the lay Rulebook Group. Our task was to make our union, our democracy and its financial management fit for purpose. As it stood, our rulebook was the product of many years of practice and piecemeal revision, where the flow of money through the

union and obligations on branches and members and the structures of our lay democracy had begun to fall out of sync with the demands and realities of the present.

On Wednesday you will hear the results of our deliberations over the management of the GMB's finances but for today the rule changes before you are for scrutiny and action primarily to deal with increasing the democracy, participation and robustness of our great union, making it a fighting fit union and arming every member in their place of work to do their very best for our membership.

You will see before you amendments of rules that are the product of recommendations made by our sister body the Branch Working Party which have fed directly into our own ideas and decision-making process, over the running, health and inclusivity of our branches. These have been supplemented by ideas directly from branch resolutions placed before us in this rule amendment here. We have not sought to stifle debate or to strike hard topics from our agenda or indeed to idealise our union's past. As you see, much of this work has been done diligently dotting all the Is and crossing all the Ts in order to improve upon the best practice that has already evolved across our seven regions.

This is a serious business and the entire rulebook group values and appreciates the trust that our members, the CEC and Congress have placed upon us in order to carry out this vital work. We have attempted as a collective to do our utmost to reflect the voices, the concerns, the vision and the core commitment of GMB's aims and objectives that run through the text of our rulebook like a fine unbreakable silver thread. Such aspirations need to be realised, to be grounded in everyday practice and the practice

that delivers practical results for our members, our branches, and for all organisational structures across the union. In this way we are committed to rationalising and standardising the practice of bylaws across the union, drawing in and recording them electronically across from all our regions over a 12-month period, starting at the close of this Congress and for ratification by the CEC.

This will tidy up procedures, ensure greater transparency of the GMB's democratic process, enhancing rather than diminishing regional self-governance. To this end we have aimed at make the rules before you clearer, more coherent, less ambiguous and with the recommendation that the same principles operate at all levels across GMB, committing a first time joiner, like the one we saw earlier, a speaker indeed, the Regional and General Secretaries, the hardest veterans of our branch life to the same rights, protections and responsibilities in building our industrial power in every workplace across the land.

Congress, I thank you for your forbearance, diligence and oversight of these proposed rule changes. Autocracy is fast and often clinical and easy. Democracy is slow, painstaking and founded upon consensus. The rule changes before you are rooted in that spirit of democracy and the sure and certain knowledge that whether small or great, old or new, every GMB member has the same right to participate, to develop, to make their voices heard and at the end of the day to help change the world we live in today.

Congress, I urge you to adopt the rule changes proposed in this paper. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nathaniel, thank you. Carol to second.

CAROL CLARKSON (CEC): President, Congress, comrades, friends, seconding the CEC Special Report on rulebook changes, speaking on behalf of the CEC. It is my pride and privilege to second this package of rule changes that the lay Rulebook Group is bringing to the GMB Congress. As you have heard already, they are the product of much thought, insight and sheer hard work. The group has operated this year on the basis of tidying up existing rules. It has been an entirely practical and, I hope, a relatively uncontroversial process. Over the next year this group intends to look at some of the areas raised by branches' motions submitted, to look at those topics that most concerns members on the rules and to take soundings not just from the experts within the GMB union but also from the lay members and representatives across every region of the GMB.

Each year since 2022 the Rulebook Group has gained ground in forging our union rulebook as a practical, industrially focused tool that safeguards this union's democracy and its lay representation with a new set of aims and objectives to restate our commitment to anti-racism solidarity, internationalism, and not just political but also economic and social democracy.

To achieve these goals the union has to function like a well-oiled machine, where every structure has a role and plays its part in the collective struggle. The rule changes placed before you today may not seem earth shattering or decisive in the age-old struggle between labour and capital, but believe me, they will serve to sharpen our union, to

ensure that it functions more securely, with greater reach, accountability and effectiveness. As a result the adoption of the rule changes represents yet another significant step to ensure that our great union can be the very best it can be in service of our members, their families and our class.

I second and heartily recommend you adopt this. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carol. Thank you for seconding it and we wish you a speedy recovery. I will now take the delegates from each region so it will be London, Midlands, North East, Yorkshire & Humber, North West & Ireland, Scotland, Southern and Wales & South West in that order. Movers and seconders for Rulebook Amendment 300, 319 and 325 to be ready as well. The delegate from London Region, please.

ADRIAN STOHR (London): I am speaking in support of the rulebook review report. London Region supports this review of GMB's rulebook which has taken another positive step forward. We welcome the tidying up of the rules that relate to the movement of money and finances of the union, and removing rules which may no longer reflect either the employment or internal structures of today's union. As this group has worked with the Branch Working Party these are practical rules which will help support our branches. These changes will strengthen and align our equality structures with our agreed national strategy and embed them firmly in our rulebook. We are reinforcing the commitment to ensure that equality and diversity runs deep through this organisation - our organisation - by ensuring firmer proposals to reserve seats on our CEC and regional councils. These changes place more accountability on

regional secretaries and national officials, drawing a clear distinction between the management and the governance of the union.

Following the change of our structures from the sections to two, we are ensuring that our regional structures are not weakened. These rule changes will correct the number of regional committee seats elected from regional councils. We welcome the removal of the requirements of organisers to be elected within the first five years of service following appointment, as these are outdated rules and would not stand up in the current employment law. Our branches' structures and payment of honorariums are also embedded in the rulebook and we welcome the new wording of branch development plans, as this will make it clearer for branches as to what their plans should include in the ever-changing world.

With the increased threat of the far right, tackling antisemitism, sexism, racism, the strengthening of rule 5 challenges this, and allows the CEC to refuse membership of anyone who has actively organised against the policy of the union and its members. Tightening this will allow our great union to ensure anyone connected with this behaviour can be refused membership by the CEC. We look forward to more discussions and more tidying up next year. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Adrian. Delegate from Midland? *(Formally supported)* Thank you, Midland. North East, Yorkshire & Humber. *(Formally supported)* Thank you very much. North West & Irish Region? *(Formally supported)* Scotland?

MARTIN MALONE (GMB Scotland): President, Congress. First-time speaker, first-time delegate. (*Applause*). Congress, the members of the Rulebook Review Group have an unenviable task. Rulebooks can be dry and tedious but they are an essential part of our union's democracy and day-to-day running of the branches. The rulebook therefore needs to change with the times and be accurate. It should not just be a law of bureaucratic decrees but reflect and make clear the values of our union and the processes, rights, structures for the benefit of the members, reps and staff.

While many of the rule amendments are simple housekeeping, they are vital. For example, clarifying and modifying the appointments of organisers mean that they reflect reality. Other amendments are even more vital, such as reserving seats on key bodies for women, which will ensure equitable representation of all our members across our union. Joining a union is not just joining an external service or signing up to an insurance. It is more than that. It is a statement of intent and a commitment between workers. Clarifying new members' rights to representation and support whilst allowing regional secretaries to use their discretion will ensure those who make that commitment get the benefit. It will make our union one that deals not in charity but in solidarity. Congress, support the statement.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Martin. Southern, have you got a speaker? (*Formally supported*) thank you very much. Then Wales & South West? (*Formally supported*)

I can now put that to the vote then. All those in favour of the rule amendments, please show. Anyone against. Those are carried, thank you very much.

We now move on to some more rule amendments but there has just been a slight change in the order of business due to a number of rule amendments being withdrawn at last night's delegation meetings. Hopefully London Region have been notified that Rule Amendment 336 will be debated after the next set of rule amendments, so 300, 319 and 325. So could I have the mover of Rule Amendment 300, please.

RULE AMENDMENT 300

RULE NO: 8.5 CLAUSE: TITLE: CONGRESS OF THE UNION

RA300. RULE NO: 8.5 CLAUSE: TITLE: CONGRESS OF THE UNION

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

For 90% of delegates, each branch of any region may nominate one member to stand for election as delegate to represent the region at the Congress. A branch whose financial membership exceeds 1,500 as stated in the membership figures for the previous September may nominate one further member per additional 1,500 members of the branch, as stated in the membership figures for the previous September. Where a branch nominates more than one member at least one nominee must be a woman. These nominations must be sent to the regional office no later than 31 December. The region will then print and issue lists during the third week of January, setting out the name and branch of each candidate. The closing date for voting will be 28 February. The candidates who receive the largest number of votes will be elected.'

State Amendment:

Delete number 1500 and insert number 1000.

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

For 90% of delegates, each branch of any region may nominate one member to stand for election as delegate to represent the region at the Congress. A branch whose financial membership

exceeds 1,000 as stated in the membership figures for the previous September may nominate one further member per additional 1,000 members of the branch, as stated in the membership figures for the previous September. Where a branch nominates more than one member at least one nominee must be a woman. These nominations must be sent to the regional office no later than 31 December. The region will then print and issue lists during the third week of January, setting out the name and branch of each candidate. The closing date for voting will be 28 February. The candidates who receive the largest number of votes will be elected.' Currently the GMB rulebook allows for delegate nomination to annual congress based on branch size. Every branch of up to 3000 members can make 1 nomination, branches of 3000-4500 can make 2 nominations, and any over 4500 can make 3 nominations. The overwhelming number of branches are entitled to make 1 nomination. In the NEYH region the vast majority of branches range from 40 members to up to 2999 members, but all are entitled to equal nomination rights. In addition, many LA branches are organised differently, some as one combined branch, others as several different groupings. This is fundamentally unfair. Whilst it is important that congress hears from a range of voices to reflect the diversity of our membership it is time to properly acknowledge the makeup of our active branches and the workplaces we represent. Congress should support the changing of the rulebook to allow 1 nomination per 1000 branch members. This would allow opportunities for branches to develop more reps to take on this crucial role, as it provides the opportunity for mentoring and shadowing.

N33 NEWCASTLE CITY LA BRANCH

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

LESLIE TIMBIE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good morning, Congress, President, from the great big region of North East, Yorkshire & Humber, I am moving Rule Amendment 300. Congress, I recognise that this is a long and technical rule

change motion, but it is fundamentally about making this Congress more representative of the hundreds of thousands of GMB members that we are here to represent. The way the current rulebook is written it makes no sense how in 2025 our branches are organising. Our great union is made up of workers from across a huge range of workplaces, the majority of which are organised workplaces but also covers where we are hoping to make break-throughs in recognition and, equally, workers in smaller companies, the self-employed and those in the gig economy. All these voices are incredibly important and it is vital they are all heard here at this Congress.

But Congress, we cannot get away from the fact that the vast majority of our branches have somewhere between 40 and 2,000 members yet every one of these branches have the right to exactly the same representation here at Congress. This simply cannot be correct. This motion is fundamentally about making the most important supreme decision-making body of our union more reflective of our members on the ground. Let me stress this is not about taking away members' voices. Of course this Congress must reflect the full diversity of our membership, but now is the time to properly acknowledge the make-up of all branches and the level of representation these workers deserve here. Fundamentally, this motion is about making this Congress reflect our membership on the ground. In my experience, democracy is only strengthened in the way we can represent the views of the many.

So Congress, please vote for a more representative Congress. Vote to support this motion and the voices of the majority of our members. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Les. Could I have the seconder, please.

KAVEH DAMENSTANI (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): From the great big region of North East, Yorkshire & Humber, Durham Local Authority Branch. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*)

I am standing to second Rule Amendment 300. Since my first day of Congress I have met great people from across the country, from a wide range of workplaces, with an incredible range of experiences, all of whom are making sure we make great policy to improve the lives of working people. I only wish that I had been able to attend before and that more of my members back in Durham could attend in the future. This is what this motion is all about. It is about allowing more of our members from our big workplace branches to have a say in the policy of the union. I echo the words of my colleague Les. Let's make sure this event truly reflects the great diversity of our union. Let's make the rulebook fit for how we organise in 2025 and let's vote for this motion. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

RULE AMENDMENT 319

RULE NO: 18 CLAUSE: 2B TITLE: QUALIFYING FOR OFFICE, AND THE DEFINITION OF OFFICERS

RA319. RULE NO: 18 CLAUSE: 2B TITLE: QUALIFYING FOR OFFICE, AND THE DEFINITION OF OFFICERS

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

2 During their whole term of office, the following holders in both lists 'a' and 'b' below must pay the full amount of their union contributions in line with rules 45 and 46.

b

- The general secretary and treasurer
- Senior organisers
- Organisers

State Amendment:

Include “Regional Secretaries” after “The general secretary and treasurer” in the bulleted list b.

Bulleted list a remains the same

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

2 During their whole term of office, the following holders in both lists ‘a’ and ‘b’ below must pay the full amount of their union contributions in line with rules 45 and 46.

b

- The general secretary and treasurer
- Regional Secretaries
- Senior organisers
- Organisers

I35 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Can I have the mover of Amendment 319, please?

GEORGE SHARKEY (London): President, Congress, I am moving RA 319, Rule 18, clause 2B. Today I would like to speak briefly in support of the proposed amendment, which concerns qualifying for office and the definition of officers. Currently clause 2B mandates that the General Secretary, Treasurer, senior organisers and organisers must pay the full amount of their union contributions during the term of their office. This ensures accountability, fairness and a shared commitment to the financial health of our union. The proposed amendment is simple but important. It adds regional secretaries

to this list of accountable positions. This inclusion is not only logical but necessary. Regional secretaries play a principal role in our union structure. They are leaders on the ground, key decision-makers and the face of the union in our respective areas. It is only fair and consistent that they too uphold the financial obligations of their counterparts in national senior roles. By ensuring regional secretaries meet the same contribution requirements, we reinforce the principle of equality among our officers. This amendment strengthens our governance, improves transparency and upholds the integrity of our union. I urge you all to support this amendment, not just a rule change, but a step forward to a more comprehensive and accountable leadership structure. Please support.

THE PRESIDENT: Seconder? (*Formally seconded*) Mover of Rule Amendment 325 then, please.

RULE AMENDMENT 325

RULE NO: 20 CLAUSE: 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D TITLE: RESERVED SEATS ON REGIONAL COUNCILS

RA325. RULE NO: 20 CLAUSE: 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D TITLE: RESERVED SEATS ON REGIONAL COUNCILS

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

Rule 20 2a – Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional councils reserved for black and minority ethnic members of the regional equality forum. Only black and minority ethnic members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election under this clause. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only black and

minority ethnic women members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

Rule 20 2b - Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional councils reserved for young members of the regional equality forum. Only young members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election under this clause. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only young women members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

Rule 20 2c - Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional councils reserved for disabled members of the regional equality forum. Only disabled members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election under this clause. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only disabled women members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

Rule 20 2d - Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional councils reserved for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of the regional equality forum. Only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election under this clause. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women members of the regional equality forum will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

State Amendment:

Amendment to apply to Rule 20 clauses 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d. Take out reserved from the regional equality forum.

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

Rul 20 2a – Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional council reserved for black and minority ethnic members. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women

and only black and minority ethnic women will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

Rule 20 2b - Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional council reserved for young members. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only young women will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

Rule 20 2c - Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional council reserved for disabled members. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only disabled women will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

Rule 20 2d - Two representatives will be elected to seats on regional council reserved for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women and only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women will be eligible to be nominated for election to that seat.

B43 BIRMINGHAM CITY GENERAL BRANCH

MIDLANDS REGION

(Carried)

ANNA-MARIE JESSON (Midlands): First-time delegate and first-time speaker.

(Applause) Speaking about Rule Amendment 325, Rule No. 20, clauses 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D rules - reserved seats on regional councils. It is a bit complicated!

The seats on regional council have rules for who can be proposed to sit on regional council to encourage equality and diversity on the regional councils. However, the rules currently actually limit the true diversity in the potential members of regional councils by limiting seats from members of specific groups on regional councils to members who are in diverse groups who are voted on to regional equality forums. This means that ordinary members who happen to represent a diverse group must be

members of the regional equality forums to be eligible for nomination onto regional council, but ordinary members who are not from specific equality groups are eligible to be nominated for the regional council.

We understand that the regional equality forums help provide diversity and representation within the regional council, but the rules are restricting ordinary members from diverse groups from being nominated to regional council. Rule 20 currently potentially places more burden on fewer individuals from diverse groups as these members are already part of the regional diversity forums. This rule amendment would open up nominations on regional councils to a wider pool of members whilst not restricting diverse groups, as these seats are still reserved. Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Anne-Marie, thank you. Seconder?

ANDREW HUMPHRIES (Midlands): Morning Congress, morning brothers and sisters, morning President. I would like to second this rule change basically to open up a better understanding for the youth and to stop the barriers for youth in the regional councils. I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: That was quick Andy, thank you. Is there any opposition no any of these rule amendments? There is no CEC speaker because the CEC are supporting all of them, so to save time I will take all three rule amendments in one vote. So, all those in favour of Rule Amendment 300, Rule Amendment 319 and Rule Amendment 325 please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That was unanimous, thank you.

*Rule Amendment 300 was **CARRIED**.*

*Rule Amendment 319 was **CARRIED**.*

*Rule Amendment 325 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have movers and seconders of 302, 303, 330 and 336 come down to the front because we will now be debating those rules and if the movers and seconders of those rule amendments are ready, and if I could have the mover of Rule Amendment 302, please.

RULE AMENDMENT 302

RULE NO: 9 CLAUSE: 4 TITLE: BUSINESS OF THE CONGRESS

RA302. RULE NO: 9 CLAUSE: 4 TITLE: BUSINESS OF THE CONGRESS

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

Rule 9 Business of the Congress Any branch or regional committee or the Central Executive Council can put forward motions for inclusion in the agenda of the Ordinary Congress. In addition the National Equalities Conference can select one motion for submission to ordinary Congress. That motion will stand in the name of the National Equalities Conference and be moved by the region that originally submitted the motion to the NEC. Branches must put forward their motions to reach the appropriate regional secretaries by no later than 31 January. Regions must pass the motions to reach the general secretary by no later than 7 February. Any branch or regional committee or the Central Executive Council can put forward proposals to amend rules at Congresses named in clause 3 above

State Amendment:

Replace with the following

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

Any branch or regional committee or the Central Executive Council can put forward motions for inclusion in the agenda of the Ordinary Congress. In addition, the National Equalities Conference and National Retired Members Association Conference can select one motion for submission to ordinary Congress. That motion will stand in the name of the National Equalities Conference or the National Retired Members Association Conference and be moved by the region that originally submitted the motion. Branches must put forward their motions to reach the appropriate regional secretaries by no later than 31 January. Regions must pass the motions to reach the general secretary by no later than 7 February. Any branch or regional committee or the Central Executive Council can put forward proposals to amend rules at Congresses named in clause 3 above

E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

JAN SMITH (London): Morning Congress. Morning, Barbara, Gary, colleagues, friends. I am also the National Secretary of the Retired Members Association.

(Applause)

Colleagues, this motion called on for us to be able to submit motions to this Congress. I know you have just voted for the rule amendment but within it although we said we could put in a motion under the name of the equalities section, or - and I repeat “or” - in the name of the Retired Members Association. We try very hard and work very hard in the interests of the GMB, not only for our retired members but we also support our younger members within the GMB. Colleagues, this is important. We need to have a voice, we need to be able to put motions forward in the name of the

RMA. Within this document it is said they are taken out for national equalities to submit a motion. As I said, within the motion it says “or the national Retired Members Association”. Colleagues, please support this motion. I know they are going to ask to withdraw it. Have your conscience at the ready and support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Secunder? *(Formally seconded)*

RULE AMENDMENT 303

**RULE NO: 11 CLAUSE: ADD ADDITIONAL CLAUSE 3E TITLE:
ELECTIONS TO THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**RA303. RULE NO: 11 CLAUSE: ADD ADDITIONAL CLAUSE 3E TITLE: ELECTIONS TO THE
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

Elections to the Central Executive Council , Rule 11

State Amendment:

3e to be added as an additional clause.

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

Two members will be elected to national retired members reserved seats of the Central Executive Council. One of the two seats under this clause will be reserved for women.

A17 ASDA BRANCH

MIDLANDS REGION

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Mover of Rule Amendment 303?

IAN POOLE (Midlands): President, Congress, moving Rule Amendment 303 for the Midlands powerhouse. This great union of ours prides itself on being inclusive. All are welcome in the GMB. We welcome the ethnically diverse. We recognise the valuable contribution of women. We defend the rights of disability. We fight for LGBTQ+ rights. We encourage the youth. To make sure these voices are heard we give them reserved seats on the CEC, and rightly so. But why don't we guarantee the voices of our retired members on the CEC? The CEC are going to ask you to oppose this motion essentially on the basis that retired members already sit on the CEC, but the same surely could be said about every strand. If all the reserved seats were removed, there would obviously be more available for other people to stand for, but we reserve these seats so that the lived experience of those individuals can be used to formulate GMB policy and make sure that our union is truly inclusive and representative of all members. So that is why retired members deserve to have their voices heard in their own reserved seats on the CEC as well.

They say that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. It is not that you can't teach an old dog new tricks; it is just that they have been there and seen it all before. They have been there, done that and bought the t-shirt. There is no substitute for knowledge and experience. Our retired members are the guiding hand that steadies the ship. Our retired members have been nothing but loyal, many dedicating their working lives and beyond to the GMB. They are committed, hard-working, dedicated and in many cases, have made selfless sacrifice for the cause. Many rights that we have taken for granted today were fought for and won by those who went before and we stand on the shoulders of giants.

While I respect the CEC and the hard work that they do, I believe them on this matter to be mistaken. The retired members are the heartbeat of this great union and so in the name of inclusion and the spirit of fairness and justice I ask you to support this motion. Thank you. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Secunder?

PATRICIA WILLMOTT (Midlands): Good morning Congress, President, comrades and friends. I am Branch Equalities Officer, Regional Equality Women's Lead, TUC National Women's Rep from the Midland Region, seconding Rule Amendment 303. I agree with my friend wholeheartedly: this is an equalities issue. Will Thorne founded this union in 1889 based on fairness and a base for equality. The average life expectancy at that time for men would have been 40 and for women round about 50. Retirement would have been a glow on the horizon, as was equality. Fast forward to Northampton to 1922-23, my great aunt, a great trade unionist and supporter and canvasser of our own, Maggie Bondfield. The first female officer for this trade union and one of the first female MPs. Let's move to the '70s and '80s. My own father when he retired remained a branch secretary and convenor for his region, for this GMB. During his time as branch secretary, convenor and regional council member he took me canvassing as a child for a wonderful feminist Labour MP for Northampton. That woman was Maureen Colquhoun, the first openly lesbian MP and feminist, and GMB supported.

Currently my own branch secretary, a retired tutor from Ruskin College, who many of

you will have been tutored by, is also still working to support this union and going as an accompanying rep. He will not be alone. There are many more of you out there.

In May this year I attended my first TUC meeting representing this trade union and guess what was on the agenda - retirement and pensions. This is an equalities issue. Please support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Patricia. The mover of Rule Amendment 330?

RULE AMENDMENT 330

RULE NO: 35 CLAUSE: 7 TITLE: BRANCHES

RA330. RULE NO: 35 CLAUSE: 7 TITLE: BRANCHES

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

7 All branch officers, and the branch committee, will be elected at the last meeting in June every four years. Nominations can be made at any of the three meeting nights before the general meeting, and should be displayed clearly in the meeting room. If no nominations (or not enough nominations) are made at any of the three meeting nights before the general meeting, nominations can be made at the general meeting. However, if enough nominations have been made, nominations for that particular office will not be accepted at the general meeting.

State Amendment:

Replace clause 7 with this wording to remove reference to June to allow for flexibilities in election cycles and remove reference to displaying in meeting rooms as these are normally sent by email.

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

All branch officers, and the branch committee, will be elected at the last meeting of the branch election cycle (or annual general meeting) every four years. Nominations can be made at any of

the three meetings before the general meeting and should be communicated to all members prior to the meeting. If no nominations (or not enough nominations) are made at any of the three meetings before the general meeting, nominations can be made at the general meeting. However, if enough nominations have been made, nominations for that particular office will not be accepted at the general meeting.

I35 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

GEORGE SHARKEY (London): Moving RA 330, Rule 35. I speak today in support of RA330, a straightforward but essential Rule 35 which governs how branch officers and committees are elected. Let me begin by saying this: our rules must serve our members not hinder them. As it stands, the current rule says that elections must take place at the last week in June every four years and that nominations must be displayed in a meeting room, but, colleagues, who in our branches rely solely on physical meetings and notice boards in a digital age? How many of us now operate in hybrid ways, using e-mails, virtual meetings, online communication as part of everyday union life?

The amendment before you removes the rigid reference to June allowing branches the flexibility to time elections according to the actual cycle or AGM. It also updates the outdated requirement that nominations must be displayed clearly in meeting rooms, something that no longer reflects how most of our members receive information. In reality, nominations are now shared by e-mail or digital notice, reaching more members, more efficiently.

Colleagues, this is not a radical change. It is a necessary update to ensure our union structures remain accessible, inclusive and modern. And here is why that change matters. Firstly, flexibility. Not every branch operates on the same schedule. Removing the word “June” gives branches the ability to plan elections that suit their local conditions and ensure we stay being democratic without being bureaucratic.

Secondly, modern communication. The rule as written assumes that every member is physically in the same room to see nominations on a wall but in 2025 many branches have members working remotely, across shifts or in entirely different locations. E-mail and digital communication are now the norm and this change recognises that reality.

Thirdly and most importantly, participation and fairness. By ensuring that nominations are communicated to all members regardless of how or where they work will increase transparency and encourage wider involvement. That is the heart of a healthy union. This is not about weakening democracy. It is about strengthening it but making sure it works in the real world we live in. If we want our union to remain relevant, representative and responsive to all members then we must be willing to update our rules in ways that reflect the ways we live and work today. Let’s modernise our process, remove unnecessary barriers and give our branches the tools they need to engage members fairly and ethically. Colleagues, I urge you to support this amendment.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, George. Could I have the seconder for Rule Amendment 330, please. (*Formally seconded*)

RULE AMENDMENT 336

RULE NO: 41 CLAUSE: ALL CLAUSES TITLE: BRANCH MEMBERS

RA336. RULE NO: 41 CLAUSE: ALL CLAUSES TITLE: BRANCH MEMBERS

Print Existing Rule or Clause:

1 Each member must pay their contributions regularly. The member is responsible for keeping their payments up to date, not the branch secretary, collecting steward or other officer.

2 If we find out that someone has become a member of the union by giving false information, we will cancel their membership.

3 Any member taking part or waiting to take part in a meeting must behave properly. If they do not, they will be refused access to the meeting or, if the meeting has already begun, asked to leave.

4 Any member who changes address must let the branch secretary know as soon as possible.

5 Every member should help other members to find suitable employment.

State Amendment:

Replace with this wording to make the clause more useful and bring it in line with current practices

Print how amended Rule or Clause is to read:

1 Each member must pay their contributions regularly. The member is responsible for keeping their payments up to date, not the branch secretary, collecting steward or other officer.

2 If we find out that someone has become a member of the union by giving false information, we will cancel their membership.

3 Any member taking part or waiting to take part in a meeting must behave properly in line with our zero-tolerance policy. If they do not, they will be refused access to the meeting or, if the meeting has already begun, asked to leave.

4 Any member who changes address must inform the Regional membership department or update their records via the national website as soon as possible.

5. Members wishing to cancel their membership must do so by writing to Regional Office giving at least 14 days notice. In line with GDPR Regulations, the member will be contacted by the Region to confirm their identity.

I35 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Then the mover for Rule Amendment 336. It will fall if there is no mover. *(Formally moved)* And seconded? *(Formally seconded)* Just before I ask for any opposition, obviously we are noticing the lights are flickering and T5 are sorting it. Apologies for the disruption. Any opposition to those rule amendments? Can I ask Nathaniel from the CEC to reply?

NATHANIAL TETTEH (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to our members' Rule Amendments 302, 303, 330, 336.

On Rule Amendment 302, the CEC has endorsed the Equality Structures Review paper which included a recommendation to remove from the rulebook the provision to promote a motion from the National Equality Conference to Congress. The CEC has put to Congress rule changes to this Congress, agreed already that remove the provision

of an Equality Conference. Therefore Rule Amendment 302 as proposed has been superseded by this decision.

On Rule Amendment 303, the other reserved seats under Rule 11 addresses under-representation of groups of members. The retired members are not an unrepresented group on the CEC, with some members of the Retired Members Association National Committee also holding office as CEC members.

On Rule Amendment 330, affecting rule 35, clause 7, the view of the CEC is that this does not add anything to the rulebook and could in fact make branch administration uneven and out of sync with the long-established practice of the majority of branches across the rest of the region. Rule 35.2 already provides for establishment and operation under these circumstances.

Finally on Rule Amendment 336, the rule amendment seeks to place greater responsibility on members wishing to leave the union to inform us, in an effort to improve our retention. It is certainly an idea which we would look to investigate further through the rulebook review and the Branch Review Working Parties, in addition to region-wide consultation. Our concern on the rule amendment's current form is that it imposes unintentionally a new way of working for members of staff in the regions without the necessary systems needed to support them. Of course, that amendment is very well intentioned and it will become part of this review we suggest.

To sum up, Congress, we are asking for all four amendments to be withdrawn and if

they are not withdrawn by the regions, we are asking Congress to oppose the rule amendments. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Nathaniel. Does London Region agree to withdraw Rule Amendment 302? (*Not agreed*) Does Midlands agree to withdraw Rule Amendment 303? (*Not agreed*) Does London agree to withdraw Rule Amendment 330? (*Not agreed*) There is a pattern forming. Does London agree to withdraw Rule Amendment 336 (*Not agreed*) As Nathaniel said, the CEC are asking you to oppose for all the reasons that Nathaniel laid out, but I will put each one of those to the vote. All those in favour of Rule Amendment 302, please show. All those against? That is carried. (*Applause*) All those in favour of Rule Amendment 303, please show. All those against? That is also carried. (*Applause*) All those in favour of Rule Amendment 330, please show? All those against? That is also carried. (*Applause*) And all those in favour of Rule Amendment 336, please show? All those against? That is also carried. (*Applause*)

*Rule Amendment 302 was **CARRIED**.*

*Rule Amendment 303 was **CARRIED**.*

*Rule Amendment 330 was **CARRIED**.*

*Rule Amendment 336 was **CARRIED**.*

Union Organisation: Representation & Accountability

RETIRED MEMBERS' VOICE

MOTION 23

23. RETIRED MEMBERS' VOICE

This Congress notes that our Retired members are an important equality strand and have vast resources to advise, assist and support all working and non-working members. Retired members may not be active in the workplace but do act as Accompanying Reps and are extremely active in branches. We call on Congress to ensure that retired members are given back their voice and full voting rights on any new National Equality Forum or Group that is being set up.

E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Now moving on to Motions 23, 27, 28 and 30 on representation and accountability. Can I have the movers and seconders down the front? Could the mover of Motion 23, London Region, please come to the rostrum?

JAN SMITH (London): President, Congress, thank you all very much for carrying Rule Amendment 302. It is very much appreciated. I am moving Motion 23. Congress, this is asking to give us a voice. We need that voice. We need that voice within the GMB. We the RMA work very, very hard and as I have said previously we support the GMB throughout in everything we do. The RMA was proposed, first moved and carried at our Congress. Like all other strands, we need to keep going. We need that voice to move forward. I know it is thought a lot of us do not pay contributions. I have paid contributions since 1963 and I am still paying. Next month I will be 80 years old but still going strong, and I hope I will go strong for a lot more years. *(Applause)*

I have stated throughout for the RMA as long as I have breath, I will continue fighting for what I consider is our rights: our rights within the GMB. We need that voice. And

if you are not sure of what we do, I would suggest within this booklet you read page 51, the Retired Members Association telling us exactly what our status is. Can I please remind you, it gets said time and time again, there are retired members on the CEC. Yes, there are retired members on the CEC but they are not on the CEC in their own right. They are there under a section - public services, manufacturing, whatever. So please, support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. The seconder for Motion 23 please. (*Formally seconded*)

PROTECTING GMB REPRESENTATIVES

MOTION 27

27. PROTECTING GMB REPRESENTATIVES

This Congress agrees that our representatives play a critical role in advocating for and protecting workers' rights. However, there have been instances where representatives were targeted, disciplined, and even suspended based on false or malicious accusations made by individuals seeking to undermine their role. Such incidents can be exploited by employers, diminishing the union's effectiveness and discouraging active representation. This congress proposes that:

1. The GMB implements clear policies for handling allegations by employers against representatives.
2. In cases where representatives face allegations from employers, the GMB continues to provide full support and all available services to safeguard their rights.
3. The GMB negotiates with employers to ensure that representatives are not suspended or penalised based solely on unproven allegations until a fair investigation is concluded.

4. The GMB holds accountable both employers and employees who are found to have made false or malicious claims, establishing stronger safeguards for representatives against such targeted attacks.

N67 NOTTINGHAM TRAM BRANCH

MIDLANDS REGION

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Mover for Motion 27?

SANDI JEAN VENNEL (Midlands): Speaking on Motion 27. President, Congress, the CEC have asked us to withdraw this motion. We believe this motion speaks to something fundamental: the protection of those who protect others. Our workplace representatives are the front-line of our union. They are the ones who speak up when others fall silent, who challenge management when others are afraid, and who carry the weight of representing their colleagues day in and day out. But time and again we have seen reps subjected to malicious false accusations used not only as a genuine grievance but as a weapon to undermine union activities. And when that happens some employers are only too happy to act swiftly, suspending reps without evidence, without process and without hesitation.

Congress, the CEC may feel existing protections are sufficient but let me ask: if that were true, would this motion even be needed? We are not calling for special treatment. We are calling for fairness. A basic commitment that no rep should be hung out to dry on the back of unproven allegation. A clear position that reps must receive full GMB support, access to services and a presumption of innocence until a fair and transparent investigation is completed. Let's also be honest, when false or malicious allegations

go unchallenged, it does more than harm a rep; it weakens our union. It sends a message that if you attack a rep they will be left isolated, and is not the message we should be sending. Not in any workplace, not in any region.

Congress, this motion is a line in the sand. It says we will stand by our reps, that we will not allow union-busting tactics to go unchecked and that we will not quietly withdraw when asked to soften a message. I urge you, back this motion. Let's send a clear signal across every workplace: attack one of us and the whole union stands by them. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sandi. Could I have the seconder for Motion 27, please? Just before you speak, can I let people know we are a running ahead of time, so thank you everybody, because that means you are keeping to time on your speeches and that is really helpful. That means we will be moving to the section on Union Organisation: Recruitment and Organisation, Motions 20, 21, 22 and we will be able to fit them in this morning's session. If you are one of the movers or seconders of those motions and you were expecting to speak this afternoon, you are now speaking this morning, so I hope you are ready. Thank you.

ADRIAN FRANCIS (Midlands): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, let's be clear, this is not about placing reps above accountability. It is about ensuring reps are not left vulnerable to bad faith attacks that are designed to silence and intimidate. Those of us who have served as workplace reps know the pressure, the long hours, the emotional toil, the battles we fight not for ourselves but for others, and we do it knowing that sometimes it will make us a target. We have seen it before, a rep

challenges unsafe working practices and suddenly they are facing an allegation. A rep leads a grievance and management just happens to dig up a complaint. Coincidence? We think not.

Congress, this motion simply says do not punish reps before the fact are known. Do not leave reps isolated when they need the union most and if someone is abusing the process to tarnish a rep, call it out. The CEC says this motion should be withdrawn. With respect, we say that is the wrong call because if we won't fight for our reps why should anyone feel safe stepping up in the first place? Thank you. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Adrian. The mover of Motion 28, please?

POLICIES AND PROCEDURE PROTECTING OUR LAY MEMBERS

MOTION 28

28. POLICIES AND PROCEDURE PROTECTING OUR LAY MEMBERS

We are calling on congress to develop and adopt policies and procedures within our rulebook to protect our lay members, activists and post holders when things occasionally go wrong. Our members work incredibly hard and on occasions when there has been a matter for investigation, our members are left isolated. Without any support in rule there are no consistent protections for our members in our union. As a worker and equality focused organisation we must provide a safe environment for our lay workforce to be able to access support, ensure they are regularly kept up to date and are informed of outcomes within a reasonable time period. The mental health impact of investigations has a detrimental effect, and we must provide clear policies that consider a person's wellbeing during a difficult process. We call upon congress to agree to:

- Creating a working group from regional council members across all of our regions to create policies in rule to protect our lay members within two months of Congress 2025.
- Consultation on this must be union wide with regional members being able to feed into this process in a timely manner.
- To report back no later than Congress 2026 with a final policy and procedure keeping the welfare of our members in mind in our rulebook.

X20 NEYH CENTRAL BRANCH

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Referred)

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region): From the great North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region) *(Applause)* Moving Motion 28, which relates to policies and procedures protecting us as lay members. Congress, this motion is about treating our people with dignity and respect. I often say that we have two incredible workforces in our great union. One is our employees and the other is us: lay members, activists, organic leaders, workplace representatives and other union postholders. Our workforce cannot and does not operate or function without the other. I am proud of the robust employment policy and procedures we have that look after our employees. However, us as lay members, the lay side of the union, do not have fit-for-purpose policies and procedures that look after our well-being and ensure we are treated fairly, with dignity and respect should we ever find ourselves in a situation where things go wrong, or we have to report matters under current rule 5 and 6. And this can happen to any of us. Occasionally when things happen, if a lay member is suspended, which is a neutral act, there is no timescale when things will be investigated by, or when an outcome of some sort will be received. We have no consistent approach union wide that provides support or allows you to have someone to talk to. My region has gone

through difficult times. I am glad I have a great relationship with my Regional Secretary whereby I ask for us to support colleagues, and Andy has supported me and my regional committee in doing this. In supporting our members, we ensure they have a named officer to speak to for support. I am incredibly proud that in times of real crisis we have offered counselling.

Congress, we need this consistency. We need procedures that do not isolate our members, because we cannot speak to any one of our colleagues in this process and we all understand the procedures and timescales for things and how long that takes or needs to be dealt by. We need to be updated and informed of the outcomes as soon as they happen. If this was in the workplace we would not allow this to happen to our member. We would support them through a fair process in a timely manner with policies to support them and, if needed, ensure occupational health are referred to.

When I talk about respect for each of us, I mean all of you, who have taken the time out to be here, acknowledging the sacrifices you all make at home and in the workplace to carry out the vital work that you do. There has been on occasion a culture of dismissing lay members and their selfless contributions to our movement. You and all of our colleagues in our regions work incredibly hard for our union and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. None of us are less than because we are not employees. I am not asking for employee status. Comments like a lay postholder “has been in a role for so many years and we want someone else new in that role” is unacceptable. If they are carrying out their role in good faith and are doing well we should not be saying things like this. This is not acceptable for an employee. We would not allow an employer to do this and we surely should not allow anyone to say this about our members and our

workers.

Today we stand here on the shoulders of giants, who created our great union, and continue to fight for our rights and democracy, looking after our amazing lay postholders who volunteer their time to help recruit and retain workplace representatives and ultimately make work better.

Congress, I urge you to vote in favour of this motion so we can start this process of improving our rulebook where all of you have a say on these fair policies and protections because we matter at the end of the day and our well-being matters. So, Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. Seconder?

RYAN HODGKINSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Speaking from the big great North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. (*Applause*) There they all are. Seconding Motion 28, Policies and Procedures Protecting our Lay Members. I am also a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause*)

I believe it is vital that we as a collective, where possible, provide the most support that we can for all of our members, not just our members but also our lay members where possible. This strikes me as an area in particular where we are often prone to fall short of this ask and when unfortunately things do sometimes go wrong. Motion 28 speaks to members being left isolated and without consistent protections. Members who are already what we all understand to be a very difficult situation, sat waiting on

tenterhooks for a result that could have massive effects on them. Currently these lay members will be left with no clear direction, no active communication from the union and no standardised expectation as to how the process will be conducted. Colleagues, my own mental state would be in jeopardy at this point. I do not want to imagine anybody else going through this.

The creation of union-wide policies and procedures to protect our lay members in these situations would help provide a standardised approach to help make up for these shortcomings in the service that we provide to our members, removing a lot of that mental strain on the member and after all is said and done, as a worker and a quality-focused organisation, should this alone not be enough of a reason to move this motion forward? Congress, please support this motion. I second it. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ryan. Could I have the mover of Motion 30, please?

POSTHOLDER ACCESS TO LIVE MEMBERSHIP DATA

MOTION 30

30. POSTHOLDER ACCESS TO LIVE MEMBERSHIP DATA

This Congress notes that branch access to relevant live membership data via the Member Administration function within the Branch Financial Reporting portal is currently limited to branch secretaries. This Congress believes that this is overly restrictive and does not reflect modern collaborative branch structures where branch convenors, the branch president or an assistant branch secretary are just as likely to be a members first point of contact, creating unnecessary delays in confirming the live membership status of callers. This Congress resolves that the GMB should review the existing provisions to enable Regions the ability to afford the same level of

access currently granted to branch secretaries to other key postholders where appropriate. K14

KENT BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Carried)

CHRIS BUTLER (Southern): Madam President, Congress, moving Motion 30 - Postholders' Access to Live Membership Data.

Today we address a matter that strikes at the heart of efficiency, transparency and accessibility within our branches. As it stands, branch access to live membership data is confined to branch secretaries through the membership administration function within the branch financial reporting portal. We would contend the restriction no longer aligns with the evolved realities of collaborative branch structures. Branches today operate through teamwork, collective decision-making and shared responsibilities. In many branch cases, branch conveners, presidents and assistant branch secretaries serve as the first point of contact for our members, ready to assist and advise and support them. Yet under the current system, the key postholders face unnecessary delays in accessing live membership status for members, and in a world where swift responses and informed engagement matter more than ever, this limitation hampers rather than supports.

This Congress recognises that restricting access to membership data to a single individual in each branch does not reflect the way modern branches function. This is overly restrictive, slows down our ability to serve members and prevents branches from working in a way that best supports those who rely on them. That is the way today.

This Congress calls for a review of existing provisions so that regions may extend the same level of access currently granted to branch secretaries to other essential postholders. Doing so will enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of our branches while safeguarding the integrity of our membership data. This is not just about data access. This is about ensuring our members receive a timely, supportive service they deserve. This is about strengthening collaboration, improving efficiency and empowering those who are in the front-line of union support. Together let's modernise our approach, streamline our processes and reform our commitment to serve members effectively. Let's ensure those working tirelessly in our branches have the tools they need to provide prompt and accurate support.

Congress, it is time to change, it is time to act. Let us move forward with the resolution and enhance our ability to serve our members with the speed, accuracy and integrity they deserve. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Chris, thank you. A seconder for Motion 30, please?

RACHEL WEBBER (Southern): I speak to you today as a branch secretary who wants to help her reps. Our union thrives on responsiveness, solidarity and trust, but how can we expect our members to feel supported when the very people they turn to in a branch role (such as the president for example) are left in the dark, unable to access the information they need? As my colleague just said, currently only branch secretaries have access to live membership data through the member administration function. This model may have served us in the past but no longer fits the way we work today. Branches have evolved. They are now built on collaboration, shared responsibilities

and flexible leadership roles, yet our data access structure has remained rigid, outdated and ultimately unfit for purpose. This limitation leads us to unnecessary delays when a member reaches out to someone other than the branch secretary. That delay is not just inconvenient; it could undermine the confidence and hinder the support we aim to provide.

By supporting this motion we are not advocating for a free-for-all. We are asking for fair, sensible review. We want regions to have a discretion to extend access responsibly and appropriately, to trusted postholders already doing the work and supporting members on the ground. This is about empowering our activists, modernising our operations and improving our service to members. Let's make sure that our structures reflect the reality of our branches today and not the way they looked 20 years ago. Support this motion. Let's move forward together and help serve our members better. Thank you. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Rachel. Anyone wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? In that case, can I ask Gwylan Brinkworth to respond?

GWYLAN BRINKWORTH (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motions 23, 27, 28 and 30.

On Motion 23, Retired Members' Voice, the CEC is asking the region to withdraw the motion. The CEC approved the establishment of a new Equalities Action Group at its meeting in March this year. It confirmed that our equality work is focused on when our members and potential members face workplace discrimination, harassment, lack of

opportunity, workplace-based segregation, unequal pay, lack of inclusion because they are disabled workers, young workers, LGBT+ workers, women workers or ethnically diverse workers. Our retired members do have an important voice in our structures, often in branch secretary roles, senior elected lay officials on the CEC, regional councils and regional committees and through the work of the Retired Members Association, which reports to Congress each year.

On Motion 27, Protecting GMB Representatives, the CEC is asking that the motion is withdrawn. We recognise the importance of the issues discussed within the motion and it is absolutely right that where the GMB reps are targeted by hostile employers, they should and would have the full support of their region to allow them to do their union duties unencumbered. GMB reps have the right under law not to be victimised for their trade union activities and can rely on the support via the regions to challenge such behaviour. We do not believe it is appropriate to have a blanket policy intended to cover all investigations as every individual situation a rep faces will be very different. It is important that regions, officers and branches are able to respond to every unique situation.

On Motion 28, Policies and Procedures Protecting our Lay Members, the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred to the Rulebook Review Working Group to consider. Any recommendations, subject to seeking advice from the union's legal advisers, will be added to CEC guidance issued under Rules 5.12 and 6.2 rather than the rulebook itself.

Finally on Motion 30, Postholder Access to Live Membership data, the CEC supports the proposal to allow additional postholders to access the member administration

function. A qualification however is that this is subject to consultation to determine which postholders may be granted access and the level of access to be granted.

Congress, to recap, CEC is asking that Motions 23 and 27 be withdrawn and that Motion 28 is referred and to carry Motion 30 with the qualification I have outlined. Thank you.
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Gwylan. Does London Region agree to withdraw Motion 23? (*No*) I didn't think you would! Does Midlands agree to withdraw Motion 27? (*No*) Does North East, Yorkshire and Humber agree to refer Motion 28? Is that an accept and refer?

FARZANA JUMMA: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Does Southern accept the qualification on Motion 30? (*Agreed*) Because Motion 28 has been agreed to be referred I do not take a vote on that. There was no opposition so I do not take a vote on refers. Everything else, the two that have not been withdrawn, the CEC will be asking you to oppose those motions. On Motion 23, can I see all those in favour, please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried. (*Applause*) All those in favour of Motion 27 please show? All those against? That is carried. (*Applause*) And on Motion 30 which was support with qualification, which they accepted, all those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 23 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 27 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 28 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 30 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We can now move on to Motions 20, 21 and 22 which, as I have just said, have been moved from this afternoon, so could I have the movers and seconders of those three motions please. Motion 20 mover.

Union Organisation: Education & Training

PRIVACY POLICY AND E-VOTING

MOTION 20

20. PRIVACY POLICY AND E-VOTING

Congress notes that the current privacy policy makes posted mail the default means of communication with members. Congress notes that the “New Deal for workers” is going to allow electronic voting for strike ballots and elections. Congress instructs the CEC to review the privacy policy to ensure that GDPR compliant email can be used by branches and the national union to communicate with members for issues such as meeting notices and other issues relating to membership rights.

X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

DAVE LEVY (London): President, Congress, moving Motion 20. This motion calls for the CEC to look at the union’s privacy policy. The privacy policy is an artifact

mandated by the GDPR and then by the laws that implemented the GDPR within the UK post Brexit. A little considered fact is that the GDPR introduced six lawful purposes for the collection and management of data, and one of these is consent. There are five others: contract, compliance, public, vital and legitimate interests. At least three of these might apply to GMB communications but the GDPR in fact weakens consent for a lawful purpose by creating alternatives. It superseded both the previous state protection laws and the EU's Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulation, known ubiquitously as PECR. It is from these previous laws that we developed the need to collect channel consent, which is where you tick off whether you are prepared to accept e-mails, phone calls or SMSs. Allowing these channel consents to override lawful purpose is the wrong way round and costs significant amounts of money and reduces our ability to serve and inform our members. Except for the mandates from TULRA, it is not the law that restricts us from using e-mail or text message; it is the privacy policy.

As for the qualification, I think there was a misunderstanding. We did not mean to suggest the current policy broke the law but, as I just explained, we think we can do better now that GDPR and UK's implementation are better understood. Let's develop a privacy policy that acknowledges all six lawful purposes and allows branches to use e-mail to communicate with members for branch business, even if we have to supplement it with real mail for those for whom we do not have e-mail addresses. Perhaps we should insist on e-mail addresses as we do for residential address and for workplaces. It will make e-balloting safer and cheaper when those become legal. I move. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Seconder?

JAMIE WALKER (London): I am seconding Motion 20, Privacy Policy and E-Voting. Dave has covered the main part of it there about the GDPR and the policy privacy updating requirements. We all know that the challenges of engaging our members in ballots and elections is still there. Traditional postal voting methods while reliable, often fall short in reaching our diverse and widespread membership effectively. To reach out to members by e-voting is not just a matter of pushing a button though. We have technical and legal challenges ahead, which is what Dave spoke about.

Embracing electronic voting as part of the New Deal for Workers is not just about modernisation; it is about inclusivity and participation. Apart from being much easier, it is much more immediate. How many of our members have picked up a ballot from the post, put it down somewhere and thought, “I’ll do it later”, and then blamed the activists when it does not go the way that we wanted it to. They say their views aren’t accurately represented. With e-voting immediacy works in our favour. So by updating our systems and privacy policy to allow for secure GDPR-compliant electronic communication, like we already do with our mass e-mail policy, we can empower our branches and the national union to connect with members much more effectively. This is not just a technical adjustment. It is a commitment to ensuring every member has a voice and the means to express it. So, Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie. Mover of Motion 21, please. Well done everybody for having their speeches ready for this morning.

UNION RECOGNITION: A CORNERSTONE OF THE TRADE UNION

MOTION 21

21. UNION RECOGNITION- A CORNERSTONE OF THE TRADE UNION

Congress notes that it has been over 25 years since the statutory procedure for union recognition was introduced. We have seen throughout the Amazon dispute, for example, how this procedure is frustrated. To that end this statutory legislation requires an overhaul.

The current procedure for union recognition is ineffective amidst a well organised employer's campaign to resist recognition. Union recognition provides safety, solidarity and to some extent security for workers in times of uncertainty. Congress notes that the Employment Rights Bill does not go far enough to change the rules on statutory recognition. It seems the power on union recognition currently remains firmly with the employer. The current legislation needs to be overhauled. Congress is asked to

1. Consider continuing to work alongside the current Labour Government to reverse the current legislation, which currently enables the employer to recognise a non- independent trade union, which prevents an independent union to apply for recognition.
2. Continue to campaign to reduce the opportunity to make a fresh claim for union recognition, following an unsuccessful application from three years to three months.

E10 EALING BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

TARANJIT CHANA (London): Moving Motion 21. Congress, a fundamental pillar

of our labour movement is union recognition. It is not just a legal term. It embodies the very essence of solidarity, of empowerment and the rights of workers across the world. Union recognition is a formal acknowledgement of employers of a trade union as a representative body for the workers. The recognition is crucial for several reasons. One, it empowers the workers by giving a collective voice who can negotiate better wages, safer working conditions and fair treatment. There is a protection of rights. Union recognition ensures that workers' rights are upheld, provides a structure for addressing grievances and disputes and fostering a culture where employees feel safe and valued. There is also collective bargaining. Union recognition gives a union the right to engage in collective bargaining on behalf of our members.

Historically Congress, you have seen the resilience of workers including those from across the shores who have come to this land, who have faced opposition, intimidation and even violence and abusive tactics, fighting for the workers for the rights of all workers in the workplace and also the unwavering belief in solidarity which has led to significant victories. Examples such as in 1968 the Dagenham Ford women machinists, 1976 the Grunwick dispute, led by south Asian women fighting for the rights of all workers, where Jayaben Desai, who was the leader in the dispute, her feet were run over by the manager in a car deliberately. In 1992 we also saw the Burnsall workers in Smethwick, again south Asian women fighting for the rights of all workers. Recently a big win at Heathrow T4, securing official recognition, giving power to bargaining for pay and conditions.

Congress, we stand on the shoulders of giants who fought tirelessly for the rights that we enjoy today but also in today's rapidly changing economic environment, the

importance of union recognition is more relevant than ever. The gig economy, remote working and technological advancements present new challenges to us as workers. As we navigate these changes, we must ensure that union recognition remains a priority no matter what form it takes.

So, Congress, let's all work together to ensure that every worker has a right to organise and their voices are heard. Union recognition is a commitment to justice, equity and dignity in the workplace. Indeed it is also a cornerstone of the trade union movement; a symbol of our collective strength and a testament to our shared values. Together we can build a future where every worker is recognised, respected and empowered through union recognition. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Secunder?

UNMESH DESAI (London): I am seconding. Congress, the dispute with Amazon has shown how the statutory procedure for union recognition introduced some 25 years can be frustrated. So we need to review and demand an overhaul of this legislation. And why? I will tell you why from my own personal experience. My political journey started with the Grunwick dispute in the late 1970s, by standing on the picket line. That dispute showed me the need for a strong independent union. But a strong independent union can only happen if the union is recognised in the first place. The Tories have flagged the importance of union recognition (unclear) and solidarity for workers in times of insecurity. We cannot allow employers' campaigns to reduce recognition go unchallenged. Yes, we have the Employment Rights Bill but that does not go far

enough in this respect. The power of union recognition it seems remains firmly with employers.

So, Congress, I say today do not allow employers to recognise a non-independent trade union at the expense of independent unions. Congress, let us campaign to allow making a fresh claim for union recognition following an unsuccessful application after three months, not three years. Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Unmesh. Mover of Motion 22, please?

WORKPLACE RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS

MOTION 22

22. WORKPLACE RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS

This Congress calls upon the GMB to review and ensure an accurate, up to date and easily accessible set of records for all workplace recognition agreements are kept, which with appropriate authority and justification can be accessed and viewed quickly and easily. It is easy for companies to derecognise the union. We then as members spend months if not years fighting for recognition again when we don't have to.

W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH

MIDLANDS REGION

(Carried)

BYRON COOKE (Midlands): Moving Motion 22, Workplace Recognition Agreements. This motion has come as a direct result of an ongoing issue that we had in our branch with a local employer which was a recognised workplace. We all know what a recognition agreement is and how it benefits our members' pay and working

conditions. We had a member come to us saying, “I want be to a workplace rep as there are some issues that are happening with the employer and a number of members are getting fed up of it.” The employer, who manages recycling centres, has a number of other sites with workplace recognition agreements in place following movement from the public sector to the private sector. Not a problem we thought. We spoke to the employer, advising them that we have a member who wants to be a workplace rep, at which point they said, “You are not recognised on this site.” Oh, but we are, and this is where the problem arises. The original recognition agreement, which is over 20 years old, cannot be found, so now we are having to fight for recognition with the recruitment of members to reach the threshold and now the employer is putting pressure on the members. It is a 20-year-old document but this motion shows that this could be avoided if the recognition agreements were kept. Thank you. I move. (*Applause*)

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

IAN PREECE (Midlands): President, Congress, I proudly second this vital motion, one that speaks not just for workers’ rights, but for fairness, dignity and proper representation in the workplace. GMB is not just a union; it is a voice for the voiceless. It stands shoulder to shoulder with working people, from hospitals to schools, from warehouses to workshops, demanding decent pay, safer working conditions and respect on the job. But that voice is only as strong as the recognition it receives. That is why I fully support this call on all employers to formally recognise the GMB through a clear Spotify-style recognition agreement. Simple, transparent, standardised across the board. No more grey areas, no more confusion. Workers should know instantly if their employer values their right to be represented. Recognition is not radical; it is

reasonable. It is not disruptive; it is a dialogue. And in today's world no employer should be allowed to duck or dodge those conversations. Let's pass this motion. Let's stand for fairness. Let's ensure every workplace hears GMB loud and clear. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ian, thank you. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? No, then can I ask the CEC speaker Paul Hunt to give the reply.

PAUL HUNT (CEC): Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 20 and 21, which we are supporting with a qualification.

First on Motion 20, this motion offers an opportunity to revisit our policy to ensure we continue to operate correctly in this area. However, our qualification is that the union already undertakes electronic communications in line with GDPR requirements.

Secondly on Motion 21, the CEC supports the strengthening of the statutory recognition scheme to include an amendment so that the existence of a recognition agreement with a listed but not independent trade union is no longer an impediment to statutory recognition of an independent trade union. This is to prevent the use of sweetheart deals being reached to prevent independent unions from being able to apply for statutory recognition. We have hopes but also concerns with the changes to recognition, namely concerns at the suggestion that non-independent trade unions may be granted rights of access. The CEC supports the removal of the three-year limit for reapplying for statutory recognition, which has put great pressure on our ability to organise over the years. The qualification is in respect of the time for a new ballot, as we have

previously suggested six months based on our members' experience in Amazon. Similar organisations such as the Institute of Employment Rights have suggested three months, and while there is not too much to choose between them, a six-month period gives us a bit more time in which to regroup.

Therefore, Congress, we are asking that you support both Motions 20 and 21 with the qualifications I have laid out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Does London Region agree the qualification to Motion 20? (*Agreed*) And the qualification to Motion 21 (*Agreed*) And the CEC is supporting Motion 22. So I will put those to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 20, thank you. Anyone against? All those in favour of Motion 21, please show. Thank you, anyone against? All those in favour of Motion 22, please show.

*Motion 20 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 21 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 22 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Congress. That concludes our first session of business for the week but before you go, I would like to show a short solidarity video from our sister trade union Comisiones Obreras in Spain. It is a video of Cristina Faciabén. I think that is going to be shown now on the screen.

(Video shown)

THE PRESIDENT: So it is lunch time. There are plenty of fringe events going on.
See you back here at 2 please.

Adjourned for Lunch.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

Conference reassembled at 2 pm

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. I hope you all had a good lunch and I hope you got to some of the fringe events and we are ready for this afternoon's session.

Will Thorne Award

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we start with announcing the winner of the Will Thorne Award for Organising. This is the inaugural year of the award - for those who have made outstanding contributions to making work and our union better.

The winner of this award has thrown themselves into campaigning across the country, organised workers into the union, supported equal pay campaigns across his local authority and attended cold picket lines at 6 in the morning in November. He kept workers' spirits warm though by leading them in the song "Get Up Stand up" by Bob Marley which Congress heard during this morning's Banner Parade.

Congress, please watch this short video about the inaugural winner of the Will Thorne Award. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

Congress, he is already on stage but please welcome the winner of the Will Thorne Award, Kelvin Enabele from North West & Irish Region *(Applause)*

KELVIN ENABELE (North West & Irish): President, General Secretary, Congress, I want to say thank you. When I got nominated for this award I did not even know about it. I have come a long circle. I remember my first experience at Congress was in Harrogate 2022. I was sitting over there as a visitor and that was the first time I experienced what it is like to be in Congress. I have lived up north in Cumbria for years, being the only black person there as a rep, trying to do what I could do to support our members. It was hard, it was difficult, and I did not know there were more people that looked like me who were involved in the union until I went to Harrogate, and that just did it for me: knowing that there is people that look like me in this union, there is a space for everybody here. *(Applause)*

And so then it is just trying to learn. es, I have got my own personal challenges that I face in the workplace and at branch level, but over the years with the support of people that I did not even expect them to have a word to say about me, it has just helped me grow. Three years ago I got introduced here when I came to Brighton as being one of the first cohort of the GRASP programme. I walked onto the stage and introduced myself and everybody clapped and then I went away and I went on that programme. That programme, I said it in Bournemouth last year, changed my life. It helped me

heal. I am now a different person. Yes, sometimes you go through these challenges in the workplace and in our community but it is how do you let it affect you. Sometimes people say it is not the water that flows around the ship that sinks it, it is the water that gets into it.

So, I want to thank the GMB. I know there are many people who look like me who are at that point where they want to give up. Please don't. This union is a great union. We have been in existence for over 100 years. Things are happening. Change is coming. We are getting better. The workplaces are getting better. Let us continue to trust the process and believe that there is a space for everyone in this union to achieve something. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well said, Kelvin, and congratulations again.

General Secretary's Report

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I would now like to invite Gary Smith to the rostrum to move the General Secretary's Report. You should all have a copy of the report in your wallets. This report chronicles the whole Union's activities over the last 12 months and what we wish to aspire to for the next.

Could I also ask for speakers on Motion 47, Composite 3, Motion 51 and Motion 54 to please be ready to move their motions after the General Secretary's Report.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: President, Congress, Gary Smith, so very proud to be

your GMB General Secretary and Treasurer moving the General Secretary's Report. Congress, when I have stood before you in previous years I have usually opened up by saying "Colleagues, comrades, fellow GMB, people, friends", I have used them all, and every one of them is true. But none of it does justice to what I really feel about this special union that we all belong to. For me the feeling is deeper, stronger and closer. For me it really is like a family. I have been a GMB member since my early days as a 16-year-old gas apprentice and no disrespect to my nearest and dearest - she is in the hall today - but this is the one, this is the longest relationship I have had in my adult life! Charlotte will walk out the hall and remind me that the house is in her name at this point!

Now Congress look, all families have their ups and downs, but the best are even better for being able to disagree and then come back together again: relationships tested, bonds made stronger. Our union in truth has had to deal with a lot - upheaval, sometimes discord - but, you know what, we have faced whatever has been thrown at us, had the courage to take a new path and we have emerged a better and stronger union as a result. Our foundations are solid. Leadership and purpose are steering us safely through choppy waters of change we are steering us safely through choppy waters of change. We are repairing the damage of the recent past, but I above all know there is still much to do.

Congress, what we are doing though is it is working, and thank goodness for it, because the direction we were taking before was a road to oblivion, and make no mistake about that. For too long our union was in denial about our membership levels and finances. We had lost focus. Members were wrongly allowed to pay unemployed or sick rates

and instead of organising new members, overall numbers were inflated by moving people into retired life.

Let me be very clear about our retired life members. They are an essential part of the GMB. They are invariably people who have given a lifetime of service to this union, but if we are to organising, if we are not organising new members, if we are not bringing new people behind our banner then we are going backwards, and that is the situation that we faced as a union: a huge decline in our financial membership year in, year out. And failure to deal with this created a systemic financial threat to the union, and make no mistake about it. You know what? The bill for plugging that gap ended up with you, the ordinary members, with repeated calls for more and more money. Not money we were investing in the future, not money to support success, not money that was supporting members in struggle, but to keep the thing afloat, all the time ignoring the holes in the bottom of the boat.

We had a choice to continue this death march to decline and irrelevance, do what failing unions always seem to do - merge with other failing organisations - or we could change, get back to workplaces, start listening again, rediscover our campaigning spirit, take control of the union's future. And that is what we did together. We had the courage to contain and the results are there for everyone to see. (*Applause*)

Congress, I am so proud to stand before you and tell you because of your hard work and thousands more like us across the country, our financial membership grew in 2024 by more than 9,000 members. And that huge achievement builds on the progress - the

substantial progress - we already made in 2023. I am pleased to say that success is continuing into this year as well.

The evidence is clear, colleagues: GMB is a better and stronger union because of the changes we have had the courage to make over the past few years. We are back in workplaces everywhere. We are listening and campaigning to make work better. People are joining us in big numbers. I have to say I desperately wish this was the case across the whole trade union movement because the truth is trade union membership in the UK has fallen again and in the private sector is getting worse with every passing year. Increasingly, the movement or parts of it are coming to resemble an exclusive members-only club for graduates. Of course, Congress, we welcome workers of all types but trade unions - and let us never forget this - were set up by working-class people who did not have a voice, and this is needed today as it was 135 years ago. GMB is staying true to our guiding principles and we are a better and stronger union because of it.

We are growing at GMB in every region and every nation of the organisation. In schools across London we have numerous campaigns running to tackle term-time only contracts and we have put in 50 new workplace organisers as a result. In Uber we are organising thousands of new members and in the Houses of Parliament we are the dominant union for hundreds of staff members in all types of jobs joining with us, and the union is also now working hard to organise in Octopus Energy. This is a company that talks the talk about its big employee credentials. Its starting point will be to recognise GMB. (*Applause*) The region is also doing great things to keep members in the union, retrieving people who have slipped out of membership and the retrieval

project that London Region piloted is now being rolled out across the whole organisation, with a powerful strike at Medirest in Northwick Park Hospital - 170 members on the picket lines and the result, up to 25% pay increases for the members and full union recognition into the bargain. *(Applause)*

Midlands - they have continued to make real progress in the battle for equal pay in Birmingham City Council. Hundreds of millions of pounds is now within touching distance for our low-paid women members. And our members were also at the heart of the battle to save British Steel in Scunthorpe. It is because of their heroism that the furnaces have kept burning and our country still has primary steel production. Congress, let's applaud our heroes of Scunthorpe. *(Applause)*

Sadly, factories in parts of the region are under threat and are closing, often because of high energy costs. The Potteries are especially affected. You will see some of the members with T-shirts on this week. Let's send our solidarity and our best wishes to our members at this difficult time. *(Applause)*

Congress, even when things seem at their toughest we keep on battling. The fight at Amazon Coventry and the fight across the country continues in the face of the worst type of union busting. So Congress, let the message go out from this hall loud and clear: we will not stop at Amazon until our members get the recognition that they so rightly deserve. *(Applause)*

In North East, Yorkshire & Humber we are running equal pay claims for our members in multiple local authorities - Leeds, Sheffield, Sunderland, Barnsley, Rotherham,

Bradford - and there are many, many more to come. They are great campaigns and we are not going to stop until our members get equal pay justice in every single one of those councils. (*Applause*)

In Barnsley Council we are doing some great work in fighting against outsourcing of essential Family Hubs and at Seawind we are fighting hard with our members with this renewables company. This is a renewables company that has taken £950 million in government grants but is trying to stop our members getting recognition. Let me tell Seawind: we are going to prevail. Our manufacturing and construction and energy reps in the meeting had a meeting with the Secretary of State for Energy. I know that they pointed out to him the realities of their workplaces, what the real world of work looks like, and I hope he listened. But folks, let us not worry too much about politicians sorting out our issues. Let us get after the employers and let us show the regional team here that everyone in this hall is with them all the way in their fights and struggles. (*Applause*).

In Barrow at BAE Systems, North West & Irish has been doing some amazing things. The branch has grown by 1,300 members in the last three years. We organise the staff, the lay reps everybody involved in building that success. You know, when I went to Barrow I was struck by the positive change that is going on in the town. I would invite anybody to go there. There is a Debenhams in the town centre. It closed down obviously a number of years ago and they are putting a submarine inside it. They are putting a submarine inside the Debenham and thousands of our young members apprentices are going to be trained in there. They are going to be doing unionised well

paid skilled jobs into the future and with big increase in defence funding coming, that branch, that town, that community are going to go from strength to strength.

In Northern Ireland school support staff membership - they have been doing some incredible things. Last year we had a strike we showed how far our organising work has come.

But I have to say for our members at Spirit Aerosystems it is an uncertain time, it is difficult. Changes in company ownership could put huge amounts of jobs at risk, but be assured, and I say this to all our comrades and friends in the region, we will be doing everything in our power to protect the interests our members at Spirit. *(Applause)*

Our members at Sellafield they are standing firm in the face of cuts to the nuclear decommissioning budget. I want to send from this platform a very, very clear message to the Government: Invest in the future of Sellafield, our members in that local community or go and find somewhere else to look after the nation's nuclear waste.

Across Scotland we are campaigning in countless local authorities, including on equal pay. I was out there last week in Glasgow. The team have secured 200 new posts in cleansing and waste and they will GMB jobs, and well done to everybody involved. Last week I was also on picket lines in Scotland standing shoulder to shoulder with our members at Scottish Water and International Beverage. Solidarity to each one of the members in struggle. And we are taking the lead in organising workers in offshore oil and gas. I have been out with the team on North Sea platforms and I heard firsthand the worries of those workers; these workers who do so much to keep the company

powered. They feel ignored by some politicians. That is not going to happen on our watch. Our message again to Government is this: get your act together, get it together fast and start listening to real workers doing real jobs. (*Applause*)

In Southern Region we have taken on South East Coast Ambulance Service. We exposed their appalling behaviour with that employer. The bravery shown by those who spoke up against management is simply inspiring. Schools continue to be a source of substantial membership growth across the region and great credit goes to the organising team who trail-blazed so much of that.

And as we are in Brighton we must mention the city council and their equal pay liabilities. No matter what brickbats those in power throw at our union, we will keep going until Brighton Council delivers equal pay justice. (*Applause*)

For Wales & South West there is a bright future for our members in Plymouth, as in Barrow increased defence spending will make sure the dockyard is the busiest it has been in decades, and again there will be big opportunities with thousands of jobs and apprenticeships created - unionised jobs - and we celebrate that. And of course it is a yard very close to my own heart. I looked after it as a young senior official.

At Hinckley Point C we are doing some fantastic work. I think Matt is here, is he in the hall with us? He is certainly up there on the banner and Matt and the team are doing some wonderful things including groundbreaking work on health and safety, equalities and inclusion. Finally, there is some fantastic campaigning in the region on equal pay

as well. Congress, since the start of the year in Cardiff Council we have put on 800 new members. Let's show them how proud we are of all their efforts. (*Applause*)

Congress, all of this great work shows we are at our very best when we listen to our members, when we focus on their aspirations, hopes and concerns. This connection, this special bond is our greatest source of strength. Making progress on what matters is often a story of direct struggle where the bad boss is the target, but so much in the workplace is governed by political decisions, the laws passed, the spending priorities, the cuts made. I have always said for GMB there are no political super heroes but politics does matter and always has for GMB. Since our first days we have known that working-class people and trade unionists need a seat at the table. We cannot leave those born into wealth and power, those who go to expensive private schools, to run politics. It is why our founder Will Thorne took the parliamentary path 100 years ago and it is why political power still matters to our members' interests today.

Our historic link is with Labour, the party of work, and it is Labour Governments who have helped deliver trade union rights that enable us to do what we are here for - organising working-class people to challenge the giants of capital and their anti-worker allies. The new Employment Rights Bill is a case in point. It is the biggest most positive step in trade union rights in 50 years and GMB has been at the heart of this Bill from the early days of opposition to Labour's manifesto and now through legislation in Parliament. That is what we do: we use our strength in every arena - industrial and political - to make work better. The Tories are out. That is great stuff and I celebrated it, but I know that Labour do not always make it easy for us to rally to their banner. Congress, it is less than a year since Labour won its landslide.

There was a feeling of real hope, real change, where we could have a common endeavour in re-building the country, where the GMB was absolutely willing to play our part. But we have to recognise that mistakes have been made - the Winter Fuel Allowance, WASPI women and the proposed cuts to welfare. My message to the Labour Government is we want you to be a success. But to do that you have to listen. Listen to GMB. Listen and think again. (*Applause*)

We also need listening on energy policy. Our union was forged in the white heat of the Beckton Gasworks in east London. Gas, energy, energy-intensive industries, manufacturing - these are at the heart of GMB's existence. For generations workers in these industries too have had to be at the sharp end of change in their work place. Their experience, knowledge and commitment provide a deep well from which government should be drawing. Our members know what they are talking about and they need to be heard. The energy transition in our country is too important to be the subject of diplomatic niceties. So here it is. If you are a gas engineer, an offshore oil and gas worker, if you are fighting for hydrogen at JCB or to produce glass in Yorkshire, if you are trying your darndest to keep your manufacturing business together under the weight of huge energy costs, right now it feels like your voice does not matter. It feels like there's a headlong rush where it is all about closing or seeing jobs go and jobs being lost to China and other places. Now this has to stop. I have told the Secretary of State this to his face. The current approach on energy will hurt jobs and prosperity and, crucially, it is not going to produce the money government needs to repair the damage to our public services from years of Tory neglect. It will not deliver the better stronger future we all need.

There need to be concrete decisions taken now too. This week we expect and we want a decision on new nuclear. GMB has fought tooth and nail for the nuclear industry. We were the union who championed it through the Labour policy process and manifesto. I say to this platform no more delays. The Government must say yes to Sizewell C nuclear power station, and they must say it this week. London Region, credit to them, are already on that site organising the security workers and they cannot wait to going with the thousands of other workers that will come to Sizewell once the project gets consented.

Congress, getting energy policy wrong, not listening to the voices of those who know their stuff and want to help plays into the hands of those who smell a political opening, and who are prepared to say anything to exploit it. Congress, Reform are what happens when politics fails to listen. Let's get one thing clear, Mr Farage and his ex-Tory soulmates are no friend of workers. They have spent a political lifetime attacking trade unions and the rights we have fought so hard for: decent pay, better conditions and the protections that we cherish. By the way, why it is always the posh private school boys who want to act like working-class heroes? Do they really think we cannot see the bankers, the chancers, the anti-union blowhards? If Reform are so pro-worker then why did they just vote against the protections against fire and re-fire, why did they vote against sick pay for all workers, why did they vote against fair pay for carers, why did they vote against trade union rights to access and organise in places like Amazon? (*Applause*). Now sadly, they are going to run town halls and what is the first thing they do: they say they are going to sack council workers. Let me tell you it is high time they were called out for their sneering, snooty attitude about so called gold-plated pensions. Go ask a local authority care worker, a refuse collector, a street cleaner, a

school support staff member if they think their meagre pension is gold plated. Many of our people cannot even afford to be in the pension scheme in the first place. Reform's abuse and name-calling of low-paid public sector workers is an utter, utter disgrace. Farage, we say this: we know you threaten the NHS and we also know you are notoriously weak on Putin too. But parties like Reform, they get a hearing because people feel they have been failed - failed by a politics dominated by neo-liberalism. A system which has sent jobs overseas to authoritarian states and has hollowed out once prosperous communities. Why wouldn't working-class people be angry? The system has effectively told folk that their labour, their sweat, their toil was worthless. They have been part of a global labour market which has meant competing with poor souls who are struggling by on a dollar a day.

Hyper-globalisation is a clear and present danger to our communities, to our cohesion and to our national security, but, Congress, I also have to say that tariffs aren't a silver bullet. We as a union are not anti-trade. I recently spent time at wonderful People's History Museum in Manchester and I thoroughly recommend it to everybody. And in those archives you can see how GMB has a proud tradition of advocating the benefits of trade, exchange and interaction, but it is not free or fair if you are competing against non-market economies or one-party regimes.

Congress, it is time in this country that we turned a new page, rebuilt our economy, brought good jobs home, strengthened our manufacturing and got the country moving again. (*Applause*)

This union is going to keep pressing, campaigning and arguing for better; for worker voices to be at the heart of decision-making affecting the daily lives of our members. We will fight to get school support staff at the table through the SSSNB, to get care workers heard in the Fair Pay Agreement, put energy workers at the centre of the debate about the future of their industry. The country has big choices to make and we are going to be at the centre of that.

Of course, we as a union, have made big choices too. Congress, we could have continued to choose the slow lane of decline and demise but together we took a brave path, built on listening, putting working-class people first. Our recovery to better health has not been easy but the rewards are immense: growth in membership, financial health, a union getting back to its best.

And Congress, this week let's renew the vows we have made to our members of bonds to each other. Let's keep setting the pace. Let's keep hungry for change. Congress, we have done so much repair work. Now is the time to kick on. It is our time: time for a better stronger GMB. Thank you, Congress. (*A standing ovation*).

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. I now put the General Secretary's report to the floor for endorsement. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against?

*The General Secretary's Report was **ADOPTED**.*

Union Organisation: Education & Training

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now move to debating motions under Union Organisation: Education & Training, so could the mover of Motion 47 come to the rostrum?

THE CO-CHAIR: Can movers and seconders of Composite 3, Motions 51 and 52 also come to the front, please?

STANDARDISATION OF GMB TRAINING COURSES ACROSS ALL REGIONS

MOTION 47

47. STANDARDISATION OF GMB TRAINING COURSES ACROSS ALL REGIONS

Background:

- GMB training courses currently vary by region, with some courses unavailable in certain areas.
- Despite regional differences, GMB members face similar challenges, requiring representatives to have consistent training and expertise.
- Variations in training create inequalities within the union, limiting representatives' ability to provide uniform support to members.

Congress resolves to:

1. Standardise GMB representative training courses across all regions to ensure all representatives receive the same foundational knowledge and skills.
2. Develop a core curriculum addressing universal member issues, while allowing for additional region-specific training as needed.
3. Regularly update the standardised training programme to reflect changes in employment law, union policy, and workplace practices.

Congress calls on the Central Executive Council (CEC) to:

1. Create a comprehensive and standardised training curriculum for all GMB representatives.
2. Collaborate with regions to identify and integrate best practices into the standardised programme.
3. Establish a monitoring and feedback system to evaluate the training's effectiveness and address gaps or regional concerns.
4. Ensure training resources are accessible and inclusive for all representatives.

N26 NEWHAM APEX BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

MOHINDA KATARIA (London): President, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker *(Applause)* I rise to move the Motion Standardisation of GMB Training Courses Across All Regions. Colleagues, we are one union, one GMB, yet when it comes to training our representatives, we are currently operating as many. At present, the training offered to our reps differs depending on where you are in the country. Some delegates' regions offer courses that others do not. Some reps are being equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to support members effectively. Others are being left behind. This simply is not good enough. Despite regional differences, our members face the same challenges, whether it is redundancy, unfair dismissal, discrimination or health and safety concerns. Every rep, no matter their region, should have the same solid foundation of knowledge and skills and confidence to meet those challenges ahead of them. This motion calls for a standardised training programme across all GMB regions; a core curriculum that ensures that every representative gets the same high-quality training and of course there should still be room for region-specific

content, but the basics, the essentials, must be consistent across the board. This is not just about fairness. It is about effectiveness. Standardised training means our reps will give consistent accurate advice. Our members will receive equal support, no matter where they live or work. Our union will speak and act with one voice, backed by shared knowledge and values. It is also about legal responsibility.

Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, our reps are expected to support members through complex processes like dismissals and redundancies. The Equality Act 2010 requires them to tackle discrimination and under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act we are legally bound to represent our members effectively. We cannot do that without properly trained reps. This motion calls on the CEC to develop and implement a standardised curriculum for all reps, work with the regions to share those best practices and make the programme strong and relevant, ensure training is inclusive and accessible to all and put in place monitoring and feedback to keep the programme current and effective. Colleagues, we are only as strong as our front line and our front line is our reps. Let's give them the tools they need not based on postcode but based on principle. Let's show our members that wherever they are GMB is ready to stand with them equally, expertly and united, I urge Congress to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

STELLA IKANIK (London): President, Congress, GRASP Ambassador, Cohort 2. I am proud to second this motion on standardisation of GMB training courses across all regions. Congress, training should not depend on your postcode but right now it does.

Some reps get excellent training and others are left without. That is not just unfair, it is unacceptable. Our members face serious issues, including dismissals, discrimination and bullying. Reps must be ready and that means every single one of them in every region deserves the same foundation of knowledge, skills and confidence. No exceptions. This motion is about fairness, consistency and unity. It is about ensuring we are not letting our reps or our members down just because of where they are based. Standardising training means stronger reps, stronger branches and a stronger GMB. It saves resources, avoids duplication and lifts every rep up, not by taking power from regions but by ensuring no one is left behind. We say we are a union that believes in equality. Well this is how we live it. We invest in our reps ---

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

STELLA IKANIK: -- equally and proudly. Congress, I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Stella. Can the mover of Composite 3 come down, please?

GMB REPS INDUCTION DAY AND TRAINING

COMPOSITE MOTION 3

Covering Motions: 49. Reps Induction Day – Midlands Region

Motion 53. – GMB Rep Training – Southern Region

Motion 54. – Improving the Quality of Representation – NEYH Region

C3. GMB REPS INDUCTION DAY AND TRAINING

The role of the workplace representative is a vital and often difficult role. The fantastic training provided by the GMB provides the resources to do this job and do it well. However, as a new representative you do not immediately have access to all these tools and resources, yet you may be representing our members and the union as a whole. This Congress notes that GMB Workplace Organisers currently receive credentials during initial support meetings, before undertaking any form of GMB training in health and safety or employment law and that once the initial training has been completed there is no requirement for reps to attend refresher training or update sessions.

This Congress supports to agree for the GMB ISM Training to be put into a one-day Training Course so that prospective new workplace Reps can be given a clear idea of exactly what it means to be a rep and understand what is involved so during the one-day they will be given an insight into the role and the opportunity to ask any questions. Our aim is for this is to help them make an informed decision on whether or not the role is for them. By doing this, we as a union would only be sending new Reps onto the 10-day training course who will be sure that becoming a workplace rep is right for them and they can fulfil the role.

This Congress believes that members deserve the best possible representation from well informed reps with relevant and up to date training.

To provide the best possible service for members we believe that newly elected representatives should be restricted in their duties as reps until they have conducted their 10 day induction course. That rather they are allowed to attend meetings with other representatives such as disciplinary and negotiations to gain experience, confidence and knowledge. However, until they have completed their induction course, they do not conduct these meetings themselves, this is not to discourage representatives but to ensure they have the right training and resources.

This Congress resolves that: -

- The GMB should review the ISM process to ensure that new reps are fully aware they should not, and commit not to, represent members without first having undertaken the relevant training and discussed the issue with their branch contact.
- Regional education departments should be required to make provisions for short focused update courses relating to technical and legislative changes; deliverable in a flexible way, be that in person, remotely, prerecorded webinars, e learning modules or self-teach materials.
- All reps upon re-election should be required to undertake update training.
- Branch secretaries should be required to undertake an annual audit of their reps training records and where necessary have discussions with anyone having failed to complete the required levels of training to see if they require any support in overcoming barriers they may face to participation, whilst emphasising the importance of attendance. Please support.

Moving Region: Southern

Seconding Region: Midlands

CHRISTOPHER WONGSOSAPUTRO (Southern): President, Congress, good afternoon. First-time delegate, first-time-speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, the Southern Region would like to move Composition Motion 3 on GMB Rep Training. We in the Southern Region would like to acknowledge their hard work and appreciate them for all the work workplace organisers have put in for our members. However, our organisers get their credentials during their initial support meetings. This is before they have received GMB training in health and safety or employment law. GMB currently runs a comprehensive mandatory training programme for new organisers. The programme as it stands covers four main aspects, workplace-organised induction, health and safety, mental health and stress at work and equalities. This is followed by

non-mandatory training covering various areas from Congress and branch organisations to understanding neurodiversity in the workplace.

Congress, the Southern Region believe members need and deserve the best possible representation from their well-informed reps whose training is relevant and up-to-date. Therefore, our motion calls for GMB to review the initial support meeting process to ensure new reps are aware of what training they would need to attend to help them perform well in their new roles. In return, the process needs to ensure new reps know they should not commit to representing members without completing the necessary training first.

If there is an issue with training, the reps should inform their branch contact in the first instance and discuss this. Doing so will ensure reps are fully equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge when representing our members. There are also benefits for the new reps in upskilling and gaining new skills and knowledge through training. Congress, there is currently no requirement for reps to attend a refresher or update training following on from this initial training. We believe all reps would need to attend the update training once they have been re-elected. We recognise things can change so quickly and suddenly so it is important our reps are aware and up-to-date with these changes.

Congress, the responsibility for the training should not only lie with the reps. Our motion calls for regional educational teams to ensure there are short update courses being run for our reps. This will help them become aware of the latest technical and legislative changes impacting our members. We understand there is no one learning

method which suits all reps; hence our motion includes a point about training being delivered flexibly. This means having training through disparate means: face-to-face, remotely through online calls, pre-recorded webinars, e-learning modules and finally self-teach materials. In this way our reps can access a combination of learning methods which will best suit them, recognising the workload and time limits being a rep would involve.

Last but not least, Congress, our motion includes a call for branch secretaries to work with our reps to have a yearly audit of the training records. If reps have not completed the necessary levels of training, branch secretaries should seek to understand their reasoning, recognising the need for empathy for the reps' individual circumstances. This also means that reps would need support in overcoming any challenges in completing the required training courses while also driving home the importance of completing them.

Congress, finally to conclude, we recognise and appreciate the contribution and hard work our reps put into their roles. We are moving this motion to help our reps serve members in the best possible way. This motion will benefit reps by ensuring they are constantly up skilled with new skills and knowledge Congress, I move, thank you.
(Applause)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Christopher. Secunder?

IAN PAUL (Midlands): Seconding for Midlands Region. We believe that our reps are the backbone of our great union dedicating their time to represent our members on the

front-line. A good rep needs continuous support and training to keep updated and refreshed on the constant changing world of employment. Our members deserve the very best, as a good rep can not only retain membership on the back of those successes but recruit and campaign; holding employers to account. We are asking for a one-day taster course which would incorporate the ISM training, to give new reps a clear understanding of what is needed to be a successful rep. We feel that this course would help potential reps make an informed choice as to whether or not the role is for them before enrolling on the 10-day GMB@Work reps' training course. This hopefully would help to reduce the amount of reps who either resign from the position or are inactive due to being overwhelmed, and as a result only reps who are fully aware of what the role entails will attend the GMB@Work course. This is a more cost-effective use of members' money, many of whom sacrifice to pay their union fees. I second, thank you. (*Applause*).

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber wish to speak to the composite? No. Could I have the mover of 51 please come to the rostrum?

PROVIDE MANDATORY TRAINING FOR ALL GM BRANCH

SECRETARIES

MOTION 51

51. PROVIDE MANDATORY TRAINING FOR GMB BRANCH SECRETARIES

This Congress calls for mandatory training for all GMB branch secretaries. The training should encompass core competencies such as governance, member representation, financial management, and effective communication to ensure consistency, accountability, and high standards of support across all branches. The union is urged to develop and deliver this training

within 12 months and ensure accessibility for all secretaries through in-person and virtual options.

Here are the key benefits of mandatory training for GMB branch secretaries:

- 1 Improved Governance: Ensures branch secretaries understand and comply with union rules and policies, enhancing transparency and accountability.
- 2 Better Member Representation: Equips secretaries with skills to effectively advocate for members' rights and address workplace issues competently.
- 3 Enhanced Financial Management: Provides knowledge on proper financial oversight, budgeting, and compliance with union financial protocols, reducing errors or misuse of funds.
- 4 Consistent Standards: Promotes uniformity across branches, ensuring all members receive high-quality support and advice regardless of location.
- 5 Strengthened Communication: Trains secretaries in effective communication with members, employers, and the wider union, fostering trust and engagement.
- 6 Increased Efficiency: Reduces the learning curve for new secretaries, streamlining branch operations and decision-making processes.
- 7 Boosted Member Confidence: Well-trained secretaries inspire confidence in the union's ability to represent and support its members.
- 8 Support for Secretaries: Provides secretaries with tools and resources to manage their roles effectively, reducing stress and improving job satisfaction. This training would benefit both branches and the union as a whole, leading to stronger, more unified representation.

PLYMOUTH P18 BRANCH

WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION

(Referred)

JONATHAN JAMES (Wales & South West) President, Congress, first-time delegate first-time-speaker *(Applause)* I am moving 51 to provide mandatory training for branch

secretaries. Colleagues, friends, I proudly move this motion calling for mandatory training for all GMB branch secretaries. Our union's strength has always come from the ground up, from our branches, from our reps, our workplace organisers, and at the heart of the structure sits the branch secretary: the first port of call for members, the voice of the branch, the keeper of our standards.

But Congress, we know that many of our secretaries take on the role with the fire in their belly and the commitment in their hearts, but not always the tools they need to do the job confidently and consistently. This motion asks for something practical, sensible and long overdue: comprehensive training for branch secretaries to ensure every member in every workplace gets the support they deserve. We are talking about core competencies, governance, rulebook understanding, member representation and case handling, financial management and accountability, communication and leadership. And importantly, we are calling for this to be rolled out within 12 months, accessible both in person and virtually so no one is left behind.

This training would strengthen our governance, improve the support we give to members, prevent financial missteps, boost confidence among our activists and, above all, show our members that this union is professional, prepared and built to last. Colleagues, this is about unity, consistency and pride in our branches. It is about building a GMB that is equipped for the future and respectful of our responsibilities to date. Let's give our secretaries the tools they need and our members the representation they deserve. We welcome this special report from the Branch Working Party. Please support this motion to support branch secretaries. I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Secunder?

CHRIS MARSH (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 51. Colleagues, we all know the pressures that branch secretaries face, dealing with complex member issues, managing finances, communication with employers and upholding the GMB's values every single day. Too often we expect our branch secretaries to just know how to do it all. That is not fair and it is not sustainability. Training is not a criticism; it is an investment. It gives our secretaries the knowledge and confidence they need to make decisions, handle challenges and represent our members with integrity and strength. It levels the playing field across regions. It ensures whether our member lives in Carlisle, Carlisle or Croydon they receive consistent high-quality support. Let's be honest, when our branch leaders feel supported, our whole union functions much better. This is about more than skills. It is about accountability, trust and professionalism. It is about showing our members that the GMB does not just talk about standards; we uphold them. Congress, we have always believed in training our reps and developing our activists. Now it is time to do the same for the backbone of our branches. I second this motion. Let us build a stronger, smarter, more confident GMB together. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Christopher. Mover of Motion 52.

INCLUSIVE TRAINING FOR ALL GMB BRANCH OFFICIALS

MOTION 52

52. INCLUSIVE TRAINING FOR ALL GMB BRANCH OFFICIALS

This Congress recognises the vital role branch officials play in GMB's success and growth. While workplace representatives receive targeted training, many branch officials who are not workplace reps are excluded, leaving them without the knowledge and tools needed to fulfil their roles effectively. The current training system prioritises workplace reps, with little focus on other branch roles. As a result, key areas such as recruitment, organising, campaigning, Equalities, and broader union awareness are insufficiently addressed for these officials. To address this gap, Congress calls on GMB, particularly the regions, to design and deliver specialised training programs for all branch officials. These programs should cover:

1. Understanding Branch Roles: Clear guidance on responsibilities and expectations.
2. Recruitment and Organising: Practical strategies for membership growth and union strength.
3. Campaigning and Advocacy: Tools for planning and executing impactful campaigns.
4. Equalities Training: Promoting inclusivity and equity in branch activities.
5. Union Awareness: Knowledge of GMB's structure, history, and mission to empower officials as union ambassadors. Providing this inclusive training will equip all branch officials with the skills and confidence to perform effectively, ensuring shared responsibility and strengthening the union.

Congress resolves to:

1. Mandate GMB regions to develop and implement specialised training for all branch officials, covering key areas such as roles, recruitment, organising, campaigning, Equalities, and union awareness.
2. Ensure this training is accessible and tailored for workplace reps.
3. Monitor and review the effectiveness of these programs in empowering branch officials and growing the union.

N26 NEWHAM APEX BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

STELLA IKANIK (London): I am here again to move the motion Inclusive Training for all GMB Branch Officials. Congress, we all know GMB's strength lies in its people: our members, our reps and, importantly, our branch officials. Yet while workplace reps rightly received structured training many of the branch officials who do not hold rep status are left without the knowledge and tools they need. These colleagues are essential. They manage admin, support members, promote recruitment, lead on equalities and help drive our campaigns, but too often they are expected to perform these vital roles with little support or no training. That is not fair. And it is holding us back. This motion seeks to challenge that. It calls on GMB, especially the regions, to develop and deliver specialised accessible training for all branch officials not just reps. The training should include: clear guidance on right roles so officials understand their responsibilities; recruitment and organising skills to help grow our union; campaigning and advocacy tools, so branches can raise their voices effectively; equalities training to encourage every branch to reflect our values; and a broad understanding of GMB's history, structure and mission, so every official can represent us with confidence.

Congress, the burden often falls on branch presidents and branch secretaries. That is not sustainable. We need shared skills, shared understanding and shared responsibility. Congress, this is not about creating something new. It is about making sure that what we already offer work for everyone. With collaboration and shared resources, this training can be delivered within existing budgets. The benefits are stronger branches, more confident officials, more engaged members and a GMB that is better equipped to

meet the challenges ahead. Let's be honest, this is about equality. If we say we are inclusive then our training must reflect that. Every official deserves the same chance to succeed regardless of their title. Congress, if we believe in fairness, growth and empowerment then we must support this motion. Let's equip every branch official not just some with the training they need to lead and thrive. Congress, I move this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

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

MOHINDER KATARIA (London): First-time delegate, second-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am proud to second the motion Inclusive Training for all GMB Branch Officials.

Congress, our branches are the heart of GMB and it is our branch officials often working behind the scenes who keep things going - supporting members, attending meetings, handling admin and encouraging recruitment. But too many of these officials, especially those who are not workplace reps, are being asked to take on big responsibilities without the training they need. That is simply not fair and it is not sustainable. This motion highlights a serious gap where reps are trained but other key branch officials are left out. That creates inequality not just amongst officials but for our members they serve. The support you get should not depend on which role your officer holds or which region you are in. We talk about inclusion, fairness and empowerment. This is our chance to act on those values.

The motion calls for accessible training that covers organising, equalities and campaigns, supports all branch roles and not just reps and is regularly reviewed to stay up-to-date. Congress, this is about strengthening our union from the ground up, giving every official the skills and confidence to lead means a stronger, more unified GMB for everyone. Congress, I proudly second this motion and urge you to support it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Is there anyone wishing to speak against these motions? No. Can I now call Donna Spicer to give the CEC response? While Donna is coming to the rostrum, can I ask for the movers and seconders of Motions 53, 54, 16 and 56 to come forward, please.

DONNA SPICER (CEC): Responding to Composite 3 and Motion 51 on behalf of the CEC. Turning first to Composite 3, GMB Reps Induction Day and Training, which we are asking to be referred. This is a perceptive and helpful composite motion which stresses the importance of the initial support meeting process in recruiting and developing our reps. The supportive role of officers and branches in identifying and nurturing our reps should already be well-established. However, it is acknowledged that the ISM needs to be looked at afresh in terms of both delivery and content which is already being addressed within the Education Review. Therefore, the question of whether or not a taster day course for reps is necessary and practical in addition to the established 10-day course can be examined within the course of the ongoing review.

On the matter of limiting reps' duties, the Branch Working Party and Education Review have both looked at issues of quality and competency for new reps. Both have raised

issues around the practicality of limiting the role of new reps before the completion of their initial 10-day training. Rather than have a commitment that may in fact deter and be largely unenforceable, it would be best to refer to the Education Review and Branch Working Party. We would not want to send a signal to the employer that they can limit the rights of the reps until they have completed their training. Legal rights for workplace representatives and health and safety representatives come in from the moment that they take up office and learning how to use these rights in practice is an important and integral part of the training itself.

On Motion 51, Provide Mandatory Training for GMB Branch Secretaries, we are asking that the region agrees to refer. This is a constructive, helpful and thoughtful motion which covers many of the things under discussion by the Branch Working Party and the Education Review. It provides a useful framework which can be referred to these bodies. It is unlikely that that mandatory level could be delivered for all branch secretaries within a 12-month timeframe as costing and trialling courses and materials would have to accompany such a move. This said, we acknowledge that the training and upskilling of branch officials is a vital area of union work and one that can be best addressed through the exploration of this motion by the two existing bodies established to look at training and education with GMB.

To sum up, Congress, we are asking that both Composite 3 and Motion 51 be referred.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Donna. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting Motions 47 and 52. Does the Southern Region agree reference back on Composite 3? (*Agreed*)

Does Midlands agree to reference back on Composite 3? (*Agreed*) And does Wales & South West agree to reference back on Motion 51. (*Agreed*) Thank you. We will now go to the vote on Motion 47 and 52. All those in favour, please show. Any against?

*Composition Motion 3 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 47 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 51 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 52 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Can I now ask for the mover of Motion 53 to come forward, please. North East & Yorkshire? No. That falls. Mover of Motion 54, please.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF REPRESENTSTION

MOTION 53

53. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION

The role of the workplace representative is a vital and often difficult role. The fantastic training provided by the GMB provides the resources to do this job and do it well. However, as a new representative you do not immediately have access to all these tools and resources, yet you may be representing our members and the union as a whole. To provide the best possible service for members we believe that newly elected representatives should be restricted in their duties as reps until they have conducted their 10 day induction course. That rather they are allowed to attend meetings with other representatives such as disciplinary and negotiations to gain experience, confidence and knowledge. However, until they have completed their induction course, they do not conduct these meetings themselves, this is not to discourage representatives but to ensure they have the right training and resources.

T25 BRANCH

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Fell)

PROVIDING PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS IN THE ET PROCESS

MOTION 54

54. PROVIDING PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS IN THE ET PROCESS

This Congress notes that currently, members who are declined legal assistance are left with limited, informal, ad hoc or haphazard support and often have to navigate the challenging process of completing paperwork and understanding legal jargon on their own. This situation is particularly difficult for our members with learning difficulties, neurodiversities, and other disabilities.

Members who are declined legal assistance face significant hurdles in their pursuit of justice. Without adequate practical support, they struggle to complete forms accurately and interpret complex legal terminology. This often leads to added stress and anxiety, which can adversely affect their well-being and the outcome of their cases.

This Congress believes that Legal processes are inherently complex, and for those unfamiliar with the terminology and procedures, they can be overwhelming. The difficulty is exacerbated for individuals with learning difficulties, neurodiversities, and other disabilities, who may find it particularly challenging to understand what is required and expected when completing forms.

Providing practical assistance with understanding terminology, completing forms, and grasping the overall process, can overcome the tangible sense members often feel of being unsupported and left to flounder when their case doesn't meet the threshold for legal assistance. A formalised approach to offering practical support could go some way to ensure that all members perceive they have an equal opportunity to pursue their claims effectively with the support of a union that

cares. This Congress resolves to train, develop and support union officials and branch lay officials enabling them to provide one-on-one assistance and offer practical support.

Equip them to understand the ET process, jargon and terminology in order to provide crucial, practical support for members to understand what is required of them, what the legal terminology refers to and how they should structure their response. Enabling officers, reps and branches to offer practical assistance with terminology, form completion, and understanding of the process, we can empower our members and ensure that they have the resources they need to pursue their claims effectively, rather than leaving them to feel unsupported because of, what is effectively, a cost-based decision. This initiative reflects our commitment to inclusivity, fairness, and solidarity, and we urge all members to support this motion.

A02 WEST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE BRANCH

MIDLANDS REGION

(Referred)

ALEX KAPITANEC (Midlands): Good afternoon, first-time delegate and first-time-speaker. *(Applause)* Quite a nervous one. This Congress notes currently members who are declined legal assistance and left with limited information, ad hoc or haphazard support and often have to navigate the challenging process of completing paper work and understanding legal jargon on their own. This situation is particularly difficult for our members with learning difficulties, neurodivergences and other disabilities. A member of our branch was diagnosed in mid-life with combined ADHD. This means as well as the inner tension and hyperactivity, they also experience a range of other traits - dyslexia, dyspraxia, hyper focus and so on. The diagnosis was supported by not only their medical specialists but also their GP, social services and occupational health. The employer agreed that such a disability required

support, and eventually identified and agreed adjustments; however, they failed to implement those adjustments. The member's sickness therefore increased and as a result until they exhausted the sickness management process they were finally dismissed. After a review of evidence, the lawyers stated there were no prospects for a win and refused to support the member through the Employment Tribunal process. Members who were declined legal assistance faced significant hurdles in their pursuit for justice. Without adequate practical support they struggle to complete forms accurately and interpret complex legal jargon. This often leads to added stress, anxiety and adversely affects their well-being and the outcome of their case. The legal processes are inherently complex and for those unfamiliar with the terminology and procedures they can be overwhelming. The difficulty is exacerbated for individuals with learning difficulties, neurodivergences and other disabilities who may find it particularly challenging to understand what is required and expected of them when completing these forms.

This Congress believes providing practical assistance with understanding terminology, completing forms and grasping the overall process can help overcome the tangible sense members often feel of being unsupported and left to flounder when their case does not meet the threshold for legal assistance. A formalised approach to offering practical support could go some way to ensure that all members perceive they have had an equal opportunity to pursue their claims with the support of a union that cares. This Congress resolves to train, develop and support union officials and branch lay officers enabling them to provide one-to-one assistance and offer practical support, equip them to understand the ET process, jargon and terminology in order to provide critical support for members to understand what is required of them and what the legal

terminology refers to and how they should structure their response. Deliverable actions could be support branches to clearly communicate -- at that point, I will step down. I move. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Alexander. Secunder?

JULIA LONG (Midlands): I am from the greatest Midlands Region supporting (*Applause*) the reference back of Motion 54. However, when the CEC review this motion, please take into consideration that our reps are on the front-line within their workplaces and regions. We are in the Midlands recognise the Employment Bill, which includes workers' rights from day one, will call on our reps to be on the ball, knowing how important it is that tribunals work. That is why it is so important to implement this training as soon as possible so when our solicitors say to members that they do not quality the reps have some understanding to inform and support those members. If you need to represent your members in the correct way and to enable you to manage their expectations, education should not be a choice. It is imperative to give confidence to all our members that we as reps know what we are doing. Thank you. (*Applause*)

EDUCATION & PROGRESSION: SUPPORTING ACCESS TO INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

COMPOSITE MOTION 16

Covering Motions

55. Supporting Access to Industrial Relations Educational Resources – London Region

57. Education & Progression in GMB – Southern Region

C16. EDUCATION & PROGRESSION: SUPPORTING ACCESS TO INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

This Congress believes that a modern and growing Union such as the GMB should have clear learning pathways for Representatives and Officers.

This Congress notes the need to facilitate the industrial relations education of its membership so that we may be better equipped to counter the actions of those that that would do us harm.

What we have in place nationally across the Union is not fit for purpose and not working. Each Region is working differently. The GMB recognises and applauds the wealth of texts published on industrial relations and recognise that it is right and proper that such texts be made available to the wider membership.

We therefore call on Congress to resolve to

- Incorporate a specific Education Programme which focuses on development and progression for Representatives and Officers
- Establish an online bank of freely available Industrial Relations materials on the GMB website and create a GMB Online Learning Platform for reps and officers to have access to when they need information, research and or a refresher as not all representatives are granted release to attend training.
- Consult with those in Industrial Relation academic field on what texts would be of use
- Take into account and include Industrial Relations texts with a focus on organising issues
- Include all areas in the training to ensure that, if a representative wanted to get involved in Equalities, Health & Safety, Industrial Relations they would be equipped for it.
- Take into account and include Industrial Relations texts with a focus on Equality Issues Meetings or a survey involving members of what they want from training would be necessary along with a sufficient budget for this to work.

Moving Region: London

Seconding Region: Southern

(Referred)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Julia. Mover of Composite 16?

DAVE LEVY (London): Honorary Vice Chair, Congress, moving Composite 16. This motion came to our delegation meeting from a branch that was not represented in the delegation, and so where and when this was composed I am not so sure of the arguments they used, but I am very pleased to be able to move this motion and introduce you to it. I would like to thank Southern Region for the power of this motion as it became a composite.

In London Region we are concerned about the training and available to ordinary members, to volunteers, voluntary officers and workers and reps who work as workers' companions. I am less familiar with the organising roles of reps because of the nature of my branch. We are concerned that the next generation of leaders are properly equipped to perform their current and their future roles. The motion proposes a series of reforms in the education programme and the delivery of such education and knowledge transfer. We propose broad consultation with experts outside the GMB to ensure the currency and accuracy of our curricula. Asking for advice from experts can never be a bad thing.

Last year Congress passed a motion asking the CEC to review the curricula, and to make them more accessible for part-time workers and for activists in part-time work or without recognition agreements. I did check the report on progress against this

particular motion, Motion 43/24, if anyone is interested, and unfortunately no progress has been reported on this particular motion.

The seconder of this motion will talk about more about the need to support members with restricted access to block release training. Our colleagues at Southern Region have also inserted a line calling for a national curriculum. This would need to be attuned for the different legal regimes that exist in Scotland, Northern Ireland and England and Wales. We can always do better. Please remind the CEC of our commitment to access to training and knowledge and support this motion. (*Applause*)

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

EWAN COATS (Southern): Good afternoon, Congress. I am seconding Composite 16. I am a first-time speaker, first-time delegate. (*Applause*) Like many of you here today I work in a school as a member of support staff, and like many of you, I struggle to get released for my rep training. My role in supporting children with special educational needs means that my absence can have massive impacts on a child's ability to manage. This means that one of my co-workers would have to step into my role to cover for me. This not only creates a challenge for the child but also for my colleagues. I have been told by the head teacher I can only go on one training course a year to help mitigate the strain on my colleagues as we are already understaffed and do not have the budget to hire an agency staff member to cover me. I could challenge this and try to go on more courses each year, but this would only put more strain on my colleagues and thus start to put a strain on the relationship I have with the members. This means it

would take me around six years to finish the mandatory training for all representatives to take and does not include any additional training that would suit my role.

This motion calls for an online learning platform that would not only allow myself and other reps in similar positions to access the quality training that GMB provides remotely, but it would also allow you to easily refresh your memory and understanding on topics that you may have learnt many years ago. Thank you for listening and please support this Composite.

ONGOING TRADE UNION EDUCATION

MOTION 56

56. ONGOING TRADE UNION EDUCATION

This Congress notes that education is of vital importance to the GMB and that the union movement has a long-established history of supporting the educational development of its members. Furthermore, the GMB recognises the value of post-graduate education in the field of Industrial Relations.

Congress resolves to:-

- Sponsor the annual tuition fees of a GMB Member on an Industrial Relations related Post Graduate Course
- Request each GMB Region to produce a report on the practicality of each GMB Region sponsoring the annual tuition fees of a GMB Member on an Industrial Relations Post Graduate Course

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Referred)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Ewan. Mover of Motion 56?

ROBBIE SCOTT (London): Moving Motion 56, Ongoing Trade Union Education, and a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* Our union has always understood that education is not a luxury. It is a lifeline, it is how we grow confident reps, informed members and future leaders. And it is how we keep the trade union movement a strong force for justice in the workplace and beyond. This motion recognises something important - that postgraduate education in industrial relations is just about personal development, it is about strengthening our union and our movement. We know the collapse of Ruskin College left a gap, but that gap not just in provision; it is in opportunity. Without access to advanced structured education we risk leaving too many potential leaders behind. That is why sponsoring GMB members to pursue post-graduate study in industrial relations is not only the right thing to do, it is strategic. It builds capacity, it brings expertise back into our branches and regions and it ensures that those with lived experience of work and struggle are the ones shaping policy, representing workers and leading negotiations. This motion is about action. It calls for practical steps, not just sponsorship, but a report from each region on how to make it happen. It is about taking collective responsibility and finding solutions to our industrial challenges.

I urge Congress, let's no delay, let's invest in our people, let's equip them with the knowledge and tools to lead because if we want a stronger union and movement we have to build it from the ground up and it starts with education. Please support Motion 56. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

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

MARK WATSON (London): Seconding Motion 56 on Ongoing Trade Union Education. For 122 years Ruskin College provided university-level education specifically for working people. Ruskin's contribution to trade union leadership is well documented. Clement Atlee taught there in 1911 before becoming Prime Minister. John Prescott studied there in 1965 earning his diploma in economics and politics before becoming Deputy Prime Minister. By 1938 Ruskin had already produced 16 Labour MPs. The college offered something unique: courses in labour history, political economy and industrial relations, taught from the working-class perspective. It was not just theory, it was education rooted in workplace reality. The collapse of the college left a gaping hole in trade union studies. To fill this gap we are requesting that Congress agrees to sponsor the annual tuition fees of a GMB member on an industrial relations related post-graduate course. That is the immediate action. But then we need to look at what the regions can collectively do. We are asking for feasibility reports, practical assessments of whether each region might practically sponsor a member's fee for a year. The Executive may suggest waiting for an Education Review to establish common learning pathways, but while we develop long-term strategies, we have members who could benefit from advanced education now. One sponsored member per year could return with expertise to strength negotiations, support workplace and representatives and train others. This motion represents practical forward planning. Congress, I urge support for this motion to preserve our educational heritage. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Mark. Does anybody wish to speak against these motions? We go to Motion 54. Midland Region, do you agree to refer? (*Agreed*) Composite 16 - do London Region agree to refer? (*Agreed*) Does Southern Region agree to refer (*Agreed*). Motion 56, does London Region – sorry, I am getting in front here. Could I ask Kay Doherty to reply to these motions. I do apologise for that.

KAY DOHERTY (CEC): President, Congress, responding to the Motion 53, 54, 56 and Composite 16 on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is asking that all these motions be referred to the Education Review and wishes to thank all writers for thinking so conscientiously about the training our activists need and deserve.

Turning first to Motion 53, the Branch Working Party and Education Review have both looked at issues of quality and competency for new reps. Both have raised issues around the practicality of limiting the role of new reps before the completion of their initial 10-day training. There are legal protections in place for reps the moment they are elected, and we do not want to instil doubt in employers on the competency of our reps. Rather than have a commitment that may in fact deter and be largely unenforceable, it would be best to refer to the Education Review and Branch Working Party.

On Motion 54 the training that the branch is calling for appears reasonable and well-intentioned. The CEC will ensure that this forms part of the Education Review to see if this is not already covered in the current 10-day course and, if not, to form part of an advanced rep's training programme, which is the basis for the need to refer the motion. We must be mindful that we do not place too much of an expectation that

branch activists will be trained to a specialist level nor to the competency level of a solicitor as they will not be indemnified if they give incorrect advice.

On Motion 56, the collapse of Ruskin College has left a gaping hole in the provision of trade union studies which the Education Review is looking always at ways to repair. However, it is unlikely that regions will be prepared to allocate funds in order to pay for course fees at post-graduate level. There would need to be a robust and transparent scheme for awarding grants and a clear understanding that the field of study would need to be trade union related. At present, there is no capacity to do so this. We might seek to move towards this position but only one we have established common learning pathways across our union. Therefore, it would be reasonable to refer the motion for consideration by the ongoing Education Review.

Finally on Composite 16, this is a thoughtful, positive and helpful composite motion. In principle we should already be doing these things. However, there are difficulties in the area of copyright and it would necessitate expenditure when there is at present no central education budget. The Labour Research Department is the obvious point for information, and regions and branches should be encouraged to subscribe and affiliate. Similarly, branches and regions should be if the habit of seeking out and paying for new literature. It should also be noted that Congress does not have oversight of officer training and development although the point about coherent education and progression is vitally important. All elements of this composite motion should be referred to the ongoing Education Review for serious consideration. Therefore, the CEC are asking for North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region to agree to refer Motion 53. For Midlands

Region to agree to refer Motion 54. And for London and Southern Regions to agree to refer Composite 16. Thank you (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Kay. Sorry about that, Conference. I nearly got us up on Wednesday! I think we were down to Motion 56. Does London agree to the reference on 56? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Colleagues all those have been referred back so there is no need for a vote. We now go to the CEC Special Report.

*Motion 53 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 54 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 56 was **REFERRED**.*

*Composite 16 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Before I take the CEC Special Report, I need to take another vote on something from the Standing Orders Committee, so please can you listen carefully to what I am reading. Congress, a matter has been drawn to my attention by the Standing Orders Committee in relation to the debate this morning on the CEC Special Report on rule amendments. Congress, as you voted for the Special Report, any rule amendments in opposition to the report should have fallen. However, due to an administrative error, the vote was taken on rule amendments which were in opposition to the Special Report. The SOC recommendation is that as Congress is the supreme decision-making body of the union and the matter has been voted on by the floor of Congress, therefore the amendments will stand. Congress, do you support the SOC's recommendation? I will take a show of hands. All those in favour of the SOC's recommendation, please show. Thank you. Anyone against.

*The SOC's recommendation was **CARRIED**.*

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: POLITICAL STRATEGY

CEC Special Report – Political Strategy

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This special report sets a refreshed strategy for “political trade unionism” following the 2024 general election. It argues that workplace power must be matched by political influence so that laws and budgets reinforce, rather than block, our members’ industrial gains. The report replaces the union’s 2018 political blueprint and builds on the 2012 report while responding to new realities: a Labour government elected on the promise of change and an end to austerity, the urgent need to make work pay, technological disruption, the net-zero transition, and rising far-right populism.

1.2 GMB helped design Labour’s flagship employment rights package and is now lobbying to keep it watertight as the Employment Rights Bill progresses through Parliament. The union’s campaigns for school support staff (reestablishing the SSSNB), Amazon Coventry workers (strengthening recognition law) and British Gas engineers (banning fire-and-rehire) show how industrial action feeds legislative reform.

1.3 GMB will press ministers to reverse cuts to the Winter Fuel Allowance, compensate the WASPI women, reform Pay Review Bodies, resist welfare cuts, secure new nuclear projects such as at Sizewell C, and build a domestic Sustainable Aviation Fuel industry.

1.4 GMB will always defend workers against anti-union forces. This report sets out clearly that Reform UK’s agenda - scrapping employment law and cutting £50bn from public services - is a direct threat to members and pledges a campaigning response.

1.5 GMB will strengthen grassroots political capacity. Regions will be supported to build and lead campaigns from the ground-up tailored to their specific devolved and local structures.

1.6 We will Work through Labour - and hold it to account. Through our representatives on Labour's NEC, National Policy Forum and Conference Arrangements Committee, plus wider coordination through TULO, GMB will push pro-worker policies and challenge government mis-steps.

1.7 In conclusion we will:

1.7.1 Secure the passage of the Employment Rights Bill without dilution and press for the remaining New Deal pledges (equal pay reform, procurement/insourcing standards).

1.7.2 Equip industrial and organising staff to exploit new rights (e.g. workplace access, fast-track recognition).

1.7.3 Intensify lobbying on key industrial priorities ahead of the 2026 elections.

1.7.4 Expand political-education programmes so more GMB activists become councillors, MSPs, MSs or MPs.

Full report can be access here:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/downloads/3382/political-strategy.pdf>

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We now move on the CEC Special Report: Political Strategy, and I will ask Dean to move the report on behalf of the CEC.

DEAN GILLIGAN (London): Speaking on behalf of the CEC and moving the Special Report on Political Strategy. Congress, last July working people across the United Kingdom brought 14 years of callous incompetent Conservative rule to an end. They voted for change and they voted Labour. I am just the messenger! Congress, having a Labour Government means our union must now adapt to match the industrial power we

build on the shop floor with the equivalent political power in Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay, Stormont and every council chamber in between, and this report sets out how we will do that.

Congress, our first mission must be to secure the passage of the Employment Rights Bill intact and in full. Every clause of this legislation has been built on the back of our members' struggles: school support staff fighting for a fair deal, Amazon workers resisting union busting in Coventry and British Gas engineers who turned fire and re-hire into a national scandal. We owe them the Deal for Working People that was promised and that is enforceable. When this Bill passes into law our union must be ready to win in the new world of work.

But Congress this legislation, while hugely significant and needed, is not enough if our members feel no better off under a Labour Government than they did under the Tories. Within weeks of taking office the new Government cut the Winter Fuel Allowance for millions of pensioners and shrugged at the Ombudsman's call to compensate the WASPI women. I will digress a wee bit, there were a lot of MPs that stood having photographs taken with WASPI women. These people need to be called out a bit. *(Applause)* Let us be plain, Congress, the movement that helped elect a Labour Government will also hold that Government to account. Change cannot be a slogan, it must be real - and it must be felt by our members.

Congress, this report also nails down a jobs first industrial strategy. Net zero is no comfort to a member reading a redundancy letter. So we demand Sizewell C on union terms, a home-grown sustainable aviation fuel industry and new UK supply chains for

offshore wind and carbon capture. We call for pay review bodies that measure real value rather than Treasury penny-pinching. Britain can decarbonise and reindustrialise at the same time, but only if unions and the workers who power the future are in the room. Congress, we must also confront the forces that threaten our members. Reform UK, our Secretary was talking about earlier, is no friend of working people. Its MPs voted against the Employment Rights Bill and would scrap thousands of protections at work while hacking billions of pounds from our public services. We have seen this before, Congress, because we know that there is nothing new about Reform. They are just Thatcherites in new clothes, and we will not let them divide us or defeat us.

Congress, our union is a federal one and we know that power and influence does not just sit at the centre. The same is true for the UK in 2025 because power today is scattered between Westminster, the devolved Parliaments, Metro Mayors and soon to be merges of councils. Our response must be equally devolved. We will continue to empower our regions to run their own campaigns and expand our political education pipeline so that the next wave of politicians carry a union card in their pocket and GMB values in their votes. Again, those MPs that jumped on the back of the unions and said, “I have got a union, let me in the door”, we have got to hold them to account on this.

Congress, when the unions stay silent in the halls of power our opponents write the rules. This document is our refusal to stay silent. It turns every grievance into a campaign, every campaign into law and every GMB member into a shareholder in genuine political power. Congress, I urge you to endorse the report. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Dean. Can I ask Maxine Butler to second the report, please?

MAXINE BUTLER (Wales & South West): Speaking on behalf of CEC seconding Special Report on Political Strategy. Congress, for the first time in 14 long years we finally have a Labour Government in Westminster again. This change did not fall from the sky. It was built by working people, by GMB members who trusted the Labour Party to deliver change, and that is now what we rightly expect. In GMB we have always known that workplace power must be matched by political power. This Special Report reaffirms exactly how we do that. First, we must finish the job on the Employment Rights Bill. These victories have been forged by British Gas engineers, Amazon strikers and school support staff who turn industrial strife into legislative change. Congress, that is political trade unionism in action.

Secondly, we will push wider priorities that make work and life better. We will not stand by while the Winter Fuel Allowance is stripped from pensioners or WASPI women are denied fair compensation. We will work every day to fight for our members, to defend their interests and better their lot.

Congress, thirdly we must defend our members from the new threat of Reform UK. Reform and the policies they have promised to implement are a threat to every worker in this country. Let us be clear, Congress, GMB has seen off their likes before and we will again. And yes, we will work through the Labour Party and hold it to account.

Our message to Labour is simple: promises made to working people must be delivered; change cannot just be a slogan.

Congress, Will Thorne told us that if unions stay silent our enemies set the rules. This report is our answer. It is a plan to use every lever - industrial, political and legislative - to make work better and to make our communities fairer. Bought if we do not do politics, politics is done to us. Let us make sure from the shop floor to Westminster it is GMB that write the rules. Congress, I second the report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maxine. I will now ask the delegate from Wales & South West to come and speak on the report, and then it will be Southern and then GMB Scotland.

IAN DAVIES (Wales & South West): Speaking in support of the CEC Special Report. Congress, we welcome this CEC statement. With a new UK Government, a new set of metro mayors and a looming Senedd election as well as Scottish and Northern Irish elections now more than ever we need clarity on delivering our political aims. This is more vital than ever as we confront the challenges facing working people across our country. Let's start with the biggest issue, Congress: we must address the rise of Reform UK. Recent polling and local election results show that Reform is making significant inroads, particularly in areas where working communities feel left behind by traditional politics. Reform has surged to second place in some polls, threatening to overtake Labour and the Tories, but GMB is clear, while Reform may shout loudly about problems, they offer no real solutions. Reform is a one-man personality cult without serious actionable policies for Wales or the UK. We must work to expose this

empty rhetoric and champion the real practical solutions that working people need. We must do this not only in meetings with politicians but on the shop floor and in our communities. Central to GMB's approach must be delivering Labour's New Deal for Working People. We welcome this as a central tenet of GMB's approach. This plan has the potential to transform the world of work by banning exploitative zero hours contract, ending fire and re-hire and ensuring a genuine living way for all workers. GMB is working tirelessly to ensure these policies are not just promises but realities for our members.

We must convince the Labour Party this is the route to tackling extremism. By strengthening trade unions, we will tackle insecurity, inequality and low pay head on. We need pay review bodies that work for people, not for anonymous employers. This is how we will put more money in the pockets of working people and boost living standards across Wales & the South West. This is how we will beat Reform. By dealing with the issues that have allowed populism to fester. But populism is not only the narrative of the right. The far left, the nationalist causes - different songs all written to the same tune. The way to beat populism is to deliver change, aspiration and hope to millions of people. A better NHS, better schools, better wages, better pay. Nationalism of any colour will not achieve this. Only social democracy with these values at its heart can do that.

We welcome this strategy that makes working pay for working people. Renewing the heart of GMB principles as the driving force for this strategy. Looking ahead to the Welsh Senedd elections in 2026 GMB must do our bit to secure a Labour Government in a changing political landscape. GMB must build a political consensus within the

Welsh Labour Party, one which re-establishes union jobs, union members and union aims at the very heart of Welsh Labour. Our political trade unionism must be at the heart of the new Welsh agenda, new nuclear as a way of insourcing, using the New Deal and social partnership to maximise workers' right and prioritising union jobs and reforms of the NHS and schools that put workers at its heart.

Congress, we will campaign for Welsh Labour Party and a Welsh Labour Government that puts working people at the heart of its next programme. Congress, these aspirations of working people must be the tune we sing to Labour, not only in Wales but in Plymouth, Bristol, Holyrood and Westminster. This report, Congress, will give us clarity in an unclear world. Our goals are simple, universal and with this report will allow us to continue to win for GMB members in an uncertain world. Please support it. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Southern?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Supporting the Special Report on Politics. Comrades, we commend the Special Report in drawing attention to the real strength of the GMB, which is building strong workplace organisation and communities in solidarity with working people, who fight bosses, and that is how we ensure change. We have been doing that since 1889. The reason I stress 1889 is that the GMB is older than every political party in this country except the Conservatives, and we are going to dance on the grave of that sorry rabble. (*Applause*) All the time we have understood the need for politics. It is not enough in the workplace if the bosses can go and change that in the council chamber or in Parliament. We commend in the report the gains that we

have made from this Labour Government, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, the proposed changes to fire and rehire, the proposed changes to the right to recognition, et cetera, and the workers' rights Bill, although the fight goes on until those are actually on the statute book.

We commend the General Secretary and GMB staff for working so hard to get that. But from our region's point of view, although we support this report, we do not think it reflects the anger in our delegation. (*Applause*) Yesterday in our delegation meeting people put forward an emergency motion to disaffiliate from the Labour Party and there was a strong feeling that that is where many of our members stand. Many of us in rural areas, in coastal towns and in manufacturing towns feel that Labour Ministers with their freebies to Taylor Swift concerts are looking at us in contempt and looking down on working people. Comrades, that needs to change. The relationship with the working class and Labour Party is not in strong health and also there is, if we are honest, strain in the relationship between the Labour Party and this union. Here in Brighton where our fantastic Sussex branch is fighting an equal pay claim on behalf of women who have been exploited for years, we have the grotesque chaos of a Labour council - a Labour council - scuttling from newspaper to newspaper, slandering the hard-working men and women that collect the bins, and bullying and threatening our GMB officials. Comrades, things are not marvellous in the relationship between the GMB and the Labour Party.

Nor can we assume any more that all the members vote Labour. Back in the 1951 general election 96.8% of the population voted for either the Conservatives or Labour. But now Labour in the polls is lower than they were in any year since 1919. Let me

tell you, it is absolutely right and we commend this in the report that the report itemises and destroys the lies from Reform. They are a danger to the working class, but let us have no illusions here. The branch president of my own branch is a school teaching assistant in Swindon. She was telling me at last year's general election all of the school support staff in her Catholic school were going to vote Reform. I was speaking to the shop stewards in Hills Waste, the bin workers in Wiltshire, good trade unionists, who fought a hard fight a couple of years ago. A really robust old-school picket lines, brought the employer to its knees and got a decent pay rise. Those shop stewards told me that many of those loyal GMB members were thinking of ripping their cards up when we said vote Labour in the last general election, because, honestly, most of them vote Conservative, and now many of them are thinking of voting for Reform. So we need to be careful with our messaging. We are right to warn that Reform are wrong but we should not be lecturing our members. Perhaps we should learn from The Teamsters union in America that polled their own members for the election last year, because although the leadership supported the Democrats, 67% of their members supported Trump, and therefore the union decided to say nothing.

I will finish on this one very brief point as I have got a red light. From 1889 to 2025 GMB has not changed our values. We sing unchanged. We cannot say that about the Labour Party. *(Applause)* We commend this report because it involves constructive work to get a good deal with the Labour Government and the Labour Party but I will tell you, Congress, from the Southern Region's perspective, Labour are on a warning. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: GMB Scotland?

TOM CARR-POLLOCK (GMB Scotland): From the mighty and marvellous GMB Scotland, speaking in support of the Special Report. (*Applause*) Congress, after 14 long years we finally get rid of the Tories, a Government which represented “me first” values which blocked basic trade union rights and pitted worker against worker in a race to the bottom. Their welfare policy showed that they had no regard for the elderly or struggling families. A Government that ensured their friends were able to get wealthier and wealthier. But even after one year with the new Government, the work is only just beginning. The Employment Rights Bill is far from perfect but a massive step forward for the lives and well-being of working people. Some of the most exploitative practices like fire and re-hire and union busting will be consigned to history with the passing of the Bill. But this is only a tool. When reps and organisers have proper training to be able to use it, they will be able to take full advantage of properly unionised and organised members. We have an opportunity before us to reverse 14 years of damage to our movement and must seize it.

Whilst the Tories are gone, we are now faced with the rise of Reform. Nigel Farage may sometimes talk left but we know this is purely opportunism as their MPs have opposed the strengthening of workers’ rights at every single stage of the Employment Rights Bill, showing that Reform is firmly on the side of employers and not the workers. Given the chance Reform will implement a Truss-like budget, privatise our public services and continue to sow the seeds of division between workers for the benefit of the bosses. As our services continue to crumble, he will find a new scapegoat to blame. People are exhausted and angry. We cannot orchestrate those who see Reform as a viable option. We need to be able to have a difficult conversation and show through

our actions that by organising industrially GMB and the trade union movement can deliver politically. Congress, please support the report. *(Applause)*

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

(Formally approved) North East, Yorkshire & and Humber? *(Formally approved)*
Midlands?

ASHTON GREEN (Midlands): President, Congress, Regional Young Leaders Lead. First-time delegate, first-time-speaker. *(Applause)* I am speaking today on behalf of the Midlands Region in full support of the CEC Special Report on Political Strategy. We support this strategy because we as a union believe in the importance of a Labour Government delivering for our working people. This includes backing Labour's fabulous New Deal for Working People, a transformative programme that places workers' rights right at the heart of Government. The New Deal includes vital pledges such as the introduction of the Employment Rights Bill, the banning of disgusting fire and re-hire practices, the creation of fairer pay and work, ending exploitative zero hours contracts, and strengthening collective bargaining and trade union rights. These are all things that we should be so proud of and will shift the power back towards the working people and create dignity in the workplace.

But be under no illusion - despite our support, in the current political landscape, it does not mean that we are silent when we disagree. It is right that we challenge political decisions where necessary. This of course includes opposing cuts to the Winter Fuel Payment, which have hit the most vulnerable in our society. We also need to continue the fight for our WASPI women and also speak out against benefit cuts that are totally

wrong and that will push those most in need further into poverty. We must never forget why the Labour Party was created and that was to be the political voice of working people in the trade union movement that supports them, and, as the report rightly says, if we do not do politics, politics will be done to us. This report is a strong reminder that political engagement is not optional but is essential to defending and advancing our rights. So Congress, please get behind this strategy and fight for the future of working rights. Thank you. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ashton.

JAMES WALKER (London): President, Congress, speaking in support of GMB's refreshed political strategy. This report matters because it speaks to the core of who we are as a trade union. GMB has always known, and we have heard it again and again today and in the report, if we do not do politics, politics will be done to us. That is why this strategy that we have is so important. It updates our political strategy to face today's challenges: a Labour Government promising change, economic instability, far-right threats and the fight to make work pay. We are proud that the GMB has helped design Labour's New Deal for Working People, but we also know promises are not enough, and this strategy is about holding them to account. We will push for a strong undiluted Employment Rights Bill, real investment in nuclear and green jobs and justice for school support staff, Amazon workers and British Gas engineers.

The report also commits us to strengthening our grass-roots voice because changes do not just happen in Westminster. It happens in our branches, in our workplaces and in our regions. And when others want to tear down our workers' rights, like Reform UK's

agenda to slash employment laws and public services, this strategy says clearly, “Not on our watch”.

Congress, this is a plan rooted in our history and shaped by our members and it is ready for the use of the future. Please support this report and let’s turn our industrial strength into lasting political power. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I will now put that report to the vote. All those in favour of this Special Report, please show. Any against?

*CEC Special Report was **ADOPTED**.*

Social Policy: Welfare Rights & Services

PLAN FOR POVERTY

MOTION 283

283. PLAN FOR POVERTY

This Congress notes

1. Poverty in the UK is at a record high. 14.4 million people are now considered to be in poverty.
2. 4.2 million children are considered to be in poverty, the highest proportion of any demographic.
3. Poverty rates in the north of England and the Midlands are significantly higher.
4. Whilst the Labour government has produced a plan to tackle child poverty, no such plan exists for the wider population.

This branch believes:

Poverty rates of 1 in 5, within the 6th richest nation in the world, are wholly unacceptable and are a complex attribution of factors, such as flat productivity, a welfare state gutted by austerity, and a continued failure of governments to meaningfully address the issue of a growing gap of inequality between the north and south. The Labour government, whilst offering plans to some of these issues and committing to tackling child poverty, is ignoring the growing crisis of poverty many see in our communities across the North of England.

This Branch therefore calls upon the Labour Party to:

- Introduce a 'Plan for Poverty' to tackle poverty at all levels across the UK
- Investigate the main drivers of poverty across the nation and produce a report on poverty across the UK
- Commit to levelling up the North of England to reduce rates of poverty compared to the South

GMP1 GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE BRANCH

NORTH WEST AND IRISH REGION

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on Social Policy: Welfare Rights & Services. Could I have the mover of Motion 283 to the rostrum from North West & Irish Region. *(Formally moved and seconded)* Thank you. We are waiting for Carol to come to speak. Any opposition first of all? If not, I will ask Carol Clarkson from the CEC to reply. We obviously have to give her a bit of time to get up here. Can I ask for movers of Motions 219, 223 and 225 to come down the be ready for the next section, please.

CAROL CLARKSON (CEC): Responding to Motion 283. On motion 283 the CEC supports the motion with qualifications. GMB has existing policy on the scourge of

poverty from Congress 2021/Motion 175, which called for the CEC to work with the TUC and lobby the Government and urged the GMB MPs to use their powers to prioritise reducing the impact of austerity. This is reinforced by further policy from Congress 2023 which instructed the CEC to lobby relevant MPs to put a halt to this disgraceful situation where your postcode means lack of funding, standards, and could leave you in poverty in 2023.

Congress, the qualification to the motion is that we are not restricted around a plan for poverty, given that on 17th July 2024 the Prime Minister announced the creation of a new ministerial Child Poverty Task Force. The Child Poverty Taskforce's objectives are: (1) support households to increase their income, including considering social security reforms that support people into work and that alleviate poverty; (2) helping to bring down essential household costs, build savings and tackle poverty debt; and (3) alleviate the negative experience of living in poverty, including through supporting families with the role of public services. Therefore, Congress, we are asking that Motion 283 is supported with the qualifications that I have set out. Thank you. Please support.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carol, sorry, we are making you work so hard today, the second time up to make a speech. Does North West & Irish Region agree the qualification? (*Agreed*) All those in favour of Motion 283, please show. Anyone against?

*Motion 283 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: So we continue with motions under Political. Can I have the mover of Motion 219 to rostrum, please?

STRENGTHENING THE NEW DEAL FOR WORKING PEOPLE

MOTION 219

219. STRENGTHENING THE NEW DEAL FOR WORKING PEOPLE

This Congress welcomes Labour's Employment Rights Bill, which begins the work of implementing the New Deal for Working People including individual day one rights for workers, bans on zero-hours contracts and fire and rehire, repeal of Minimum Service Levels legislation and most of the Trade Union Act 2016.

Congress also notes that Labour's Next Steps document makes clear that implementing the New Deal is an ongoing process.

Congress is concerned that many of the rights enshrined in the New Deal will only be enforceable by vulnerable workers if they have a trade union in their workplace.

Congress also agrees with the ILO (International Labour Organisation) that collective bargaining is of critical importance and that 'through collective bargaining, workers can negotiate for better wages and improve their standard of living. In addition, collective bargaining helps to reduce inequality, support economic growth, and promote decent work by ensuring that workers have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Promoting inclusive collective bargaining systems and other forms of social dialogue is key to helping ensure a just share of the fruits of progress to all.' Congress believes that if the New Deal is to achieve its aim of shifting the balance of power between workers and employers, there must be further action to promote workplace organisation, collective bargaining and enshrine the right to strike.

Congress calls on the union to campaign for:

- the extension Fair Pay Agreements (sectoral collective bargaining) wherever unions believe them to be appropriate and necessary
 - Further amendments or legislation to make it easier for unions to organise and win recognition
 - further legislation within the lifetime of the current Labour government to establish a legal right to strike
- Congress also calls on all GMB Branches and Regions to affiliate to the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom.

X59 NW LONDON BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

JAMES ROLLES (London): Good afternoon, Congress. I am a first-time delegate and I am a first time speaker. *(Applause)* I am from the London Region, which is as good as and equal to every other region in this room!

We applaud the New Deal for Working People. This legislation was drafted and written by the trade unions and will form the centrepiece of this Labour Government's legislative agenda. I do not need to remind delegates how transformative this legislation will be and how this will be, hopefully, the biggest legacy this Labour Government will give us.

This motion says that the legislation that is passing through our Parliament as I speak should not be the end of the New Deal for Working People process but it is the beginning of the process. This legislation should be the foundations on which we build the next tranche of UK employment legislation. This motion is asking for the

continuation of the New Deal for Working People beyond what is in the current legislation. We are calling for the extension of sectoral collective bargaining. This will be a game-changer for our movement. This will allow the GMB to negotiate pay and working conditions for all workers in a specific industry, or in a sector, rather than on an individual company-by-company basis. Also this motion talks about the right to strike. It is ridiculous that in this country, where trade unions began, we do not have the legal right to strike, and we need that on our statute book.

So, this is what this motion is calling for. These are fundamental human rights that we are asking for. We are also encouraging branches to affiliate to the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom. Please support. (*Applause*)

MIZAN CHAUDHURY (London): President, Congress, I rise to speak in favour of Motion 219, Strengthening the New Deal for Working People. Let's be clear, the Employment Rights Bill is a step forward, and a welcome one. Day one rights, a ban on hire and rehire, scrapping zero hours contracts, repealing the worst of anti-union laws. It has been a long time coming. But, Congress, we know this is not job done, this is job started, because the rights on paper mean nothing if workers cannot enforce them. We all know who enforces rights in the real world. It is not HR departments. It is us, it is trade unions.

As the International Labour Organization rightly says, collective bargaining is not a luxury. It is a lifeline. It is how we lift wages, fight inequality and give working people real voices in decisions that shape their lives. If we want to truly rebalance power in the workplace, we need to go further. That means extending fair pay agreements, not

in theory but in practice, it means stripping back the barriers to recognition, to organising, to taking action when employers will not listen, and yes, it means enshrining the legal right to strike in law, without strings, without fear.

Congress, this union has never sat on the sidelines and we will not start now. That is why we support affiliation to the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom. That is why we will keep up political pressure, to ensure this Bill does not gather dust but gets on the statute books full and fast. We have waited long enough. Now it is time to deliver. Let's make work pay. Let's make power real. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Mover of 223?

CAUTION NEEDED OVER COERCION - ASSISTED DYING

MOTION 223

223. CAUTION NEEDED OVER COERCION – ASSISTED DYING

This Congress notes that on 29th November 2024, the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill passed a second reading in the House of Commons by 330 votes to 275 votes. Congress notes that the question of assisted dying is a controversial one, where people hold strong moral positions in good faith, both in favour and against. The parliamentary vote followed the convention of “conscience” votes, where individual MPs were not whipped by their political parties. Congress further notes that 235 Labour MPs voted in favour, and 147 Labour MPs voted against. Congress notes that concerns have been raised by, among others, Labour MPs Rachael Maskell and Diane Abbott about the dangers of coercion. Congress also notes that 350 Disability Rights groups have announced their opposition to the bill. Congress believes that were assisted dying to be enacted into law, then the strictest protections would be needed to prevent coercion.

Sadly, many individuals suffer coercion and control, either directly, or indirectly through social pressure. Congress believes that as the bill was presented at second reading, it provides weaker protections against coercion than are required. For example, the bill allows a clinician to suggest assisted dying to a patient, which itself could become coercive pressure. The clinicians approving a request for assisted dying are not required to have training to recognise signs of coercion. Although two doctors are required to assent, they have no obligation to meet the patient face to face, and there is no obligation that they consider whether the patient is being coerced. If the second doctor declines assent, then the first doctor can simply choose another. Although a High Court judge must approve the assisted death, there is no obligation for there to be a hearing, nor for the judge to interview the patient or the doctors. Congress notes that the bill is presented by a private member, and not as a government bill. Congress further notes that (while there may be differences of opinion about the make up of the unelected chamber) the House of Lords typically performs a hugely valuable technical role of scrutiny and proposing constructive amendments to bills, and in the case of government bills, the House of Commons therefore provides time for reviewing Lords amendments. Congress notes that in the case of private members' bills the House of Lords is constrained by convention from making any amendments unless the government makes available time in the Commons for those amendments to be considered. Congress notes that in the case of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, the government has not allocated time for Lords amendments to be considered in the Commons..

Congress believes that in the absence of a robust, universal and state funded hospice service, patients may be pushed towards assisted dying as the lesser of two evils, and that this implied coercion will be felt most strongly by the disabled, by people of colour, and women. For this very reason, the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission has warned that the bill, as drafted, could force terminally ill people to choose an assisted death because of a lack of a viable

alternative of palliative care, and this would be in breach of their rights under the European Convention of Human Rights.

Congress further notes that while the civil rights group, Liberty, supports the principle of assisted dying, their director, Akiko Hart, says that “ultimately the safeguards of this bill are just not robust enough and leave too many details to be decided later”

Congress believes that strong and sincere views will be held by GMB members on both sides of the debate. We celebrate the long established tradition of our union to have fraternal and constructive debate, and to seek unity not division.

Congress believes that for such consequential legislation, it is imperative that the bill receives effective scrutiny and potential amendments in the House of Lords.

Congress further believes that the lack of time allocated in the Commons for considering Lords amendments may constrain such scrutiny and amendment.

Congress further believes that as a trade union, we have a moral responsibility to ensure that society implements the strictest controls to protect the vulnerable. Any legislation that potentially could disproportionately disadvantage the disabled, or women, or people of colour, or the elderly, or the socially marginalised breaches the goals of social solidarity which GMB holds so dear.

Congress resolves that GMB should ask all MPs and Lords, and especially Labour MPs and Lords, to give due consideration of the questions of coercion, and the lack of universal access to palliative hospice care. GMB asks MPs and Lords to only support legislation on assisted dying if they are fully convinced that sufficient safeguards exist to protect the vulnerable.

Congress resolves that GMB should lobby the government to make available time in the House of Commons for House of Lords amendments to be considered, to facilitate the House of Lords in making amendments to strengthen protections against such coercion. Congress resolves that should the Bill become law, then GMB will continue to campaign for strong protections against

coercion, and for a universal, well-funded hospice service, to provide terminally ill patients with genuine choice.

W15 THREE SHIRES BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Lost)

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): It is me again. I am moving Motion 223 about the Assisted Dying Bill. It is important to understand that this motion is neutral on the issue of assisted dying. It is probably not something the GMB should take a view on, because we recognise that there are strong and sincere arguments on both sides of the debate, and on both sides of the debate people are informed by kindness and compassion. This is entirely about whether the particular Bill going through Parliament now has enough safeguards against coercion. It is one thing for people to decide themselves that they wish to have assisted dying. It is entirely another thing if people are coerced or pressured into having their life ended when it may not actually be a free choice. We are asking that the GMB takes the same position as the Royal Society of Physicians and the Royal Society of Psychiatrists that they are neutral on the principle but they have concerns about the Bill itself. The Royal Society of Psychiatrists has made some very good points. There can be no psychiatrist on the panel because the currently proposed legislation does not amend the Mental Health Act, which means psychiatrists have a statutory duty to oppose suicide, so there would be no psychiatrist. We were promised a judge would be involved in the process. Now no judge will be involved in the process and the Royal Society of Physicians points out that there will be nobody involved in the process who is trained to spot the signs of coercion. And we know what we mean. We mean elderly people who are made to feel a burden by their

relatives, perhaps because they are disabled, perhaps because they are inconvenient, perhaps because people are looking from their inheritance early. We know from other countries the disproportionality and that there will be more elderly people, more people of colour, more disabled made to feel like a burden and pressurised into assisted dying.

There is also no real free choice if palliative care and hospices are not available. In this country palliative care and hospices are a postcode lottery because they are not provided by the NHS, they are largely provided by charities. I took a tragic call from a member of our branch who works in the local hospice in Wiltshire called Dorothy House who was saying that because of the increased national insurance employer's contributions, Dorothy House was making her and a number of other palliative care workers redundant. In fact, she was not even allowed to tell her clients in an end-of-life condition that she would not be visiting them anymore because they said that might distress them. They were going to find out when she just did not turn up.

Comrades, the CEC is opposing this motion and I think their arguments come down to the fact that it is too controversial, but the GMB can be brave and take controversial points. We have been brave and stood up for abortion rights when that was controversial. We were brave and stood up for trans rights when that was controversial. I am sure that we can take a controversial position if necessary but, actually, I do not think that standing up against coercion and coerced dying is controversial.

There is also an argument that this is a free vote. Yes, it is a free vote, and what we are asking is that all MPs examine their conscience and, whether they support assisted dying or not, they should consider whether this particular Act in its current form

provides enough safeguards. Only this week two Labour MPs, Markus Campbell-Savours and Josh Fenton-Glynn, both of whom are strong supporters of assisted dying, have moved into the No camp. They are opposing it because they think the safeguards have been watered down. In fact, there is a weakness that this is a Private Member's Bill, because out of 100 amendments designed to strengthen the precautions against coercion, only two of the 100 were heard in the last debate before it went to a vote.

Comrades, I think it important that the GMB protects the vulnerable. Please overturn the CEC's message and let this be our message ringing out from the GMB: "Yes, I am my brother's keeper, yes, I am my sister's keeper: I will protect the vulnerable."

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

TRACEY ALLAM (Southern): Madam President, Congress and comrades, first-time delegate, first-time-speaker. (*Applause*) Brothers and sisters, in Canada assisted dying became legal in 2016 with the passage of the Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) law. Initially MAID was restricted to terminally ill individuals but was later extended to include those experiencing unbearable suffering from an irreversible illness or disability in 2021. In 2024, 15,343 deaths involved MAID, approximately one in 20 of all deaths in the country, an increase of 15.8% in just two years. It is my great fear that in a time of increasing adult social care costs and only a third of hospice care being funded by the state, with two-thirds raised by hospices themselves, usually through charitable donations, people could be coerced into assisted dying. If I was a cynical woman, I would comment on the opportunity to save money this could potentially offer

in today's economy. Protections for victims of coercive control were only updated in law in 2021, when it was recognised that coercive control is a serious form of domestic violence, similar to physical violence. We need to ensure there are ironclad protections should assisted dying become legal in the UK. As well as my worries for people with terminal and chronic ill-health who are unable to receive adequate healthcare, this is very personal to me. I am a next of kin and advocate for my brother who has an acquired brain injury. This is something that could happen to any one of us after an accident. I was very shocked to learn that people with intellectual disability already face major barriers to receiving appropriate and effective health care. Research indicates that all too often people with intellectual disability either receive inadequate medical care or treatment that is too late. Social stigma ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Tracey, can you wind up now, please.

TRACEY ALLAM: -- enhance the risk of poor outcomes for people with learning disabilities. Without safeguards, this Bill has the potential to make this worse. I urge you to support this motion. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

WELSH ANTI-RACISM PLAN

MOTION 225

225. WELSH ANTI-RACISM PLAN

This conference calls on the GMB nationally to have a dialogue with UK Government to move towards the same direction as the Welsh Government's on its Anti-Racism Action Plan. Under Boris Johnson in 2021, Lord Sewell, who led on a controversial review from the Commission on

Race and Ethnic Disparities, which was heavily criticised by a large number of organisations on the content of the report (Sewell Report).

This conference asks the GMB nationally to campaign and get the UK Government to commit and produce an action plan that will stop prejudice in society towards Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic communities.

CARDIFF 1 C48 BRANCH

WALES AND SOUTH WEST REGION

(Carried)

THE CO-CHAIR: Mover of Motion 225.

JACQUELINE SHORTE (Wales & South West): Wow, this is intense! Madam President, Mr Secretary, Congress. I move Motion 225. I am first time at Congress and a first-time-speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you. I hasten to add I will be a long-time dreamer of the traffic light system!

I move this vital motion calling on our union to demand from the UK Government what the Welsh Government has already shown is possible: a real, robust and accountable anti-racism action plan. Let's be clear, racism is not just a matter of individual prejudice. It is built into the very systems that shape our lives, in our workplaces, our public services, our schools and our streets. The Welsh Government Anti-Racist Action Plan is a beacon of hope and a model for the rest of the UK. It is not just a set of promises. It is a living, breathing commitment to make Wales an anti-racist nation by 2030, with measurable goals, accountability and the voices of the global majority at its heart. This plan was born out of hard truths and hard work. It listens to the lived

experiences and sets out the real actions to dismantle the structures that perpetuate inequality. It is about representation and about ensuring our services are fair and about making sure that every person, no matter their background, can live, work and thrive without fear of discrimination.

But while Wales moves forward, the UK Government lags behind. The Sewell Report published under Boris Johnson's Government was condemned by countless organisations for failing to grasp the depth and reality of racism in Britain. It did not deliver the action our communities needed. We cannot accept complacency or denial. We must demand more. This is not just a Welsh issue. It is a UK issue. It is a GMB issue. Our members come from every background and every walk of life. Racism anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We have seen the pain and anger that erupts when people feel unheard and unprotected. The riots of 2024 were a stark reminder that we cannot wait for tragedy before we act. So, today I ask Congress let's stand together. Let's campaign for a UK-wide action plan that matches the ambition and urgency of Wales. Let's demand accountability, transparency and real change. Let's make sure our union is on the right side of history, standing up for equality, for justice and for every one of our members. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Jacqueline. Secunder?

SUNIL PANDY (Wales & South West): President, Congress, seconding Motion 225. President, Congress, colleagues, I am very proud to second this motion, and I do so with a sense of urgency and hope. We have heard now how the Welsh Government's Anti-Racism Action Plan is not just words on a page. It is a bold, practical road map

for change shaped by the voices and experiences of those who know racism all too well. It is about action, not just aspiration. It is about changing lives, not just changing language. But we cannot allow progress to stop at the border of Wales. Our union, our members and our communities deserve better from the UK Government. We deserve leadership that listens, learns and acts to root out racism wherever it exists. We know the cost of inaction. We know that when Governments fail to act, it is working people - our members - who pay the price. Whether it is in the criminal justice system, in public service, or in the workplace, institutional racism holds people back and divides us all. The Welsh approach shows what can be achieved when we put people first, when we measure our progress and when we hold ourselves accountable. At GMB we have always fought for fairness, dignity and respect. This is our fight. This is our moment to demand that the UK Government follows Wales's lead, listens to the evidence and commits to a national action plan that will make a real difference. Let's not settle for less. Let's be the union that stands up, speaks out and leads the way to a fairer, more equal Britain for all. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Anyone wish to speak against any of the motions? Can I now call Gary Harris on behalf of the CEC?

GARY HARRIS (CEC): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC.

THE CO-CHAIR: Sorry, Gary.

A SPEAKER: Can we speak against Motion 223?

THE CO-CHAIR: You are a bit late but come up then. Thank you.

A SPEAKER (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): It was a last-minute decision. Sit down, Gary! Sorry, guys, it was a last-minute decision to speak against 223 after listening to what was said. Both being NHS workers, myself being a paramedic, and my colleague working with those who have cancer, we do not disagree that more money needs putting into hospice care, but this should not deflect from people's right to choose assisted dying. We recognise concerns raised about the robust safety needs that need to be put in place, but this should not under any circumstances mean that people should have their choice removed.

TRACEY AUSTIN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber) : This is a debate that needs to be open. We do not need to be picking a side now to shut this debate down or for us to stop talking about it while the Bill goes through Parliament. There is nothing worse than when you are sat with families by their bedsides trying to explain to them that there is nothing further that can be done for that person and that they are going to go through untold suffering until the end of their life. It is not right, it is not good and this debate needs to be kept open, not shut down here today. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleagues. Does the mover of 223 want the right to reply?

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): Two minutes. Thank you, I was surprised that nobody spoke against it, so thank you. As I say, I think it is very important to recognise that,

on both sides of the debate, people are moved by kindness and compassion and their views are sincerely and strongly held. But there are a couple of things which I did pick up from what you said - and I totally respect your point of view and where you are coming from - but one of the things you said was under no circumstances must their choice be removed. One of the areas where I think there is concern and where perhaps choice does need to not be -- removed is wrong, is that if the system does not allow you to tell whether the choice is a genuine choice or whether someone has been coerced, then I think that the legislation, and because I do not want to address the principle of whether this is right or wrong, I want to address the fact that the current legislation, people like the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the civil liberties group Liberty, are all saying that as it is currently set up there are insufficient safeguards to protect people from being coerced into assisted dying when it is not their own choice. And that is a circumstance, if the legislation is not strong enough to distinguish between the two, then I do think that it is back to the drawing board. People cannot have a choice for assisted dying if by opening the door to it also means that someone else can have the door opened to what is effectively assisted murder.

You say we do not want the debate to be shut down. No one is shutting down the debate. All we are asking is that MPs consider the issue in their free vote, because it will be decided in Parliament not here. We want them to consider the issue of whether they are satisfied that the safeguards in the current legislation are enough. If they are satisfied - and it is their choice - then vote for it if they believe in it. If they are not satisfied, then vote against it. Let us protect the vulnerable. Let there be no coercion. Let there be no doubt. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Andy. I will now call Gary Harris.

GARY HARRIS (CEC): I feel like Dean Gilligan doing the Hokey Cokey. President, Congress, Gary Harris responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 219 and 223. The CEC is supporting Motion 219 with a qualification. The GMB has and continues to place a significant amount of focus and pressure on ensuring that Labour delivers what was agreed in its manifesto regarding the Employments Right Bill and Make Work Pay. We will campaign to ensure that legislation is passed and in place as soon as possible, including around industrial action. The motion calls for affiliation to the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom. As is normal custom and practice, this would need to be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the CEC for further consideration. The CEC is asking that Motion 223 be withdrawn. Firstly, we wish to stress that we have utmost empathy and solidarity with our members who have strong connections to this issue on either side of the argument due to their personal experiences and those of their loved ones with terminal illness. This is a complex, emotive and serious debate, where public opinion is clearly strong on both sides. Therefore, the CEC does not feel that it would be fair to make Congress delegates responsible for taking a GMB position on what circumstances an individual person should be able to end their own life. This motion seeks to place that responsibility on delegates by calling for GMB to support amendments to the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. However, the motion does not specify what amendments GMB should be asking MPs to make in order to address the concerns that it raises. This is the issue, Congress.

The motion rightly refers to our union's ability to have constructive debate and to seek

unity, not division. However, the CEC is concerned as to whether this motion as it is worded allows GMB to take a constructive position on this most individual matter of choice. Neither do we feel that its cause would achieve unity amongst our wider membership on this issue. Congress, we will have many GMB members relying on their union at work outside of this hall today who will strongly disagree with each other on whether individuals should be able to end their own life. What they will be united by though is their view that it is not the purpose of their union to take a view on their behalf. Where GMB can help is in what we do best: protecting our members at work from coercion and intimidation, no matter their views and no matter the outcome of this Bill. This is our existing policy, agreed by you at Congress in 2015, where Motion 294 explicitly recognised that the question of assisted dying will be decided upon the Government of the day, that Congress agreed that care workers should be protected by this union from any intimidation or coercion they may experience at work, no matter their views. GMB takes a collective position that the legislation could compromise the existing policy to protect those members, as employers and medical authorities could assume their views match those agreed by Congress today, in a hall where those members are not present to have their say.

The CEC does agree with the motion's call for fair funding for hospice and palliative care, which GMB continues to campaign for in line with long-standing policy. Therefore, the CEC is asking for Congress to support Motion 219 with the qualification set out and for Motion 223 to be withdrawn. If Motion 223 is not withdrawn, then the CEC is asking Congress to oppose this motion.

THE CO-CHAIR: Does London accept the qualification? (*Agreed*)

Does Southern agree to withdraw the motion? (*Not agreed*) We will go to the vote then. All those in favour of 219, please show. Any against? That is carried. Southern are not going to withdraw Motion 223 and, as you heard, the CEC are asking you then to vote against this motion. All those in favour of the motion, please show? All those against? That is lost. Motion 225, all those in favour, please show? Any against? That is lost.

*Motion 219 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 223 was **LOST**.*

*Motion 225 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Can I now ask for the movers of Motions 227 and 228 to come to the front please. The mover of 227?

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM

MOTION 227

227. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM

Congress notes

1. The Government, on 9 Dec 2024, suspended processing of Syrian asylum seeker claims in response to the fall of the Assad regime.
2. The government acknowledges the situation in Syria is not safe. The Foreign Office advises against all travel there. The Foreign Secretary stated “Assad’s demise brings no guarantee of peace. This is a moment of danger as well as opportunity.”
3. On 13 December, Asylum Matters and over 200 other organisations wrote to the Home Secretary, urging her to reverse the suspension.

4. Many asylum applicants have already been trapped in limbo for years due to the backlog engineered by the last Tory government. This suspension extends their pain. Many are banned from working, forced to subsist on £8.86 per week, and warehoused in barracks and hotels.

Congress believes:

1. We welcome the end of Assad's brutal dictatorship. Our solidarity is with those people in Syria who are working to win a future of peace, freedom, equality, secularism and democracy.

2. The suspension of asylum processing is inhumane; contradicts the government's own assessment of the situation in Syria; and sets a dangerous precedent of blanket treatment of entire nationalities.

3. It is a cowardly concession to racist, anti-refugee agitators. It will only further fuel and empower the bigoted far-right. A Labour government should stand for humanity and solidarity. Congress calls on the CEC to call on the Labour Government to:

1. Immediately end the suspension;

2. In accordance with GMB policy, to grant all people seeking asylum day-one equal access to work and social security

3. Commit to no forced or coercive removals of Syrians in the UK.

X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

DAVE LEVY (London): Honorary Vice Chair, Congress, moving Motion 227 on Refugees and Asylum. This motion refers to the Labour Government's decision on 9th December to suspend processing of Syrian asylum seekers' claims in response to the fall of the Asad regime. It did this despite acknowledging the situation in Syria was not safe and remains so. The Foreign Office advises against all travel there. The Foreign

Secretary stated, “Asad’s demise brings no guarantee of peace. This is a moment of danger as well as opportunity.” The decision was immediately opposed by Asylum Matters and over 200 other organisations, who wrote on the Labour Home Secretary urging her to reverse the suspension. The decision means that many asylum applicants, who have already been trapped in limbo for years due to the backlog engineered by the last Tory Government, this extension extends their pain. Many are banned from working, forced to subsist on £8.86 a week and warehoused in barracks and hotels. This motion establishes as policy that we welcome the end of Asad’s brutal dictatorship, our solidarity is with those people in Syria who are working to win a future of peace, freedom, equality, secularism and democracy, that the suspension of asylum processing humane, contradicts the Government’s own assessment of the situation in Syria and sets a dangerous precedent of blanket treatment of entire nationalities.

We, Congress need to state that we consider it a cowardly concession to racist, anti-refugee agitators. It will only further fuel and empower the bigoted far right. A Labour Government should stand for humanity and solidarity. We call on the CEC to call on the Labour Government to immediately end the suspension and commit to no forced or coercive removals on Syrians in the UK. Congress, please pass this motion.
(Applause)

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

JONATHAN COLES (London): Vice-President, Congress, seconding this important motion on asylum seekers from Syria. Some of you may have been here in past years when I have spoken on the difficulties I had in getting my late wife a visa, and

eventually we won in court. I was lucky. I had a mum who was able to silence the Home Office barrister. I had someone to speak up for me. Many asylum seekers and refugees do not have that. On the one hand, the Government is saying the situation in Syria is bad and with other countries has given those fleeing the regime a welcoming home. But a welcoming home is not treating people with suspicion but treating them humanely. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and given the support to live and not be too reliant on charities and local authorities. This also applies once someone has been granted leave to remain, as the transitional support is very little. Applications should not be suspended and should be processed on each individual's circumstances. You cannot just presume everyone is trying to cheat the system. It is always a minority and the Home Office can carry out checks as part of its processing. We must be much more welcoming and supporting to all those seeking refuge and not treat them as bad as the regimes that they are already fleeing from. Everyone deserves the same dignity and respect. Please support with the qualifications. I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jonathan. Mover of 228?

FOR A FAIR AND HUMANE IMMIGRATION POLICY

MOTION 228

228. FOR A FAIR AND HUMANE IMMIGRATION POLICY

Congress notes the Government's commitment, outlined in the King's Speech on 17th July 24, to introduce a Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill; a Migration Advisory Committee report on 16th July 24 which highlighted exploitation of Seasonal Workers; the Guardian report 24 June 24, detailing the adverse impact of the Health Surcharge. The Tories gave the UK an inhumane, regressive border regime, seeking to scapegoat migrants for the misery caused by

austerity and deregulation. Restricting migrant rights makes people more precarious, undermining all workers' power to push back against exploitation, all of which the GMB oppose. We note that Labour's 2023 NPF report (ref 1) committed Labour to conduct "a full review of the "hostile environment". We note this promise did not appear in the manifesto. Congress confirms its opposition to the hostile environment.

Congress calls on the Government to begin by reversing the legacy of Tory cruelty. This means going further than the King's Speech. We call for the

- The repeal of Illegal Migration Act 2023, Nationality and Borders Act 2022, and Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016
- A guarantee of safe and legal routes for asylum seekers
- give asylum seekers day-one rights to work, education, and social security.
- give asylum seekers and all citizens the right to family reunion
- abolish "no recourse to public funds" and NHS charges Congress calls on the Labour Government to:
- level up domestic workers' rights
- grant all UK residents equal voting rights
- treat migrants and their families with dignity by ending immigration raids, detention and deportation
- introduce a simple process for all residents to gain permanent residency • end "double sentencing"
- pursue agreements with other countries giving reciprocal rights to travel, live, work and study without a visa Congress calls on the CEC to campaign for these aims within the TUC and the Labour Party and the Labour Government.

Ref 1:

www.labourfreemovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Labour-NPF-Sept2023-compressed.pdf

X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

DAVE LEVY (London): Vice-Chair, delegates, Congress, it is hoped that this motion represents progressive policy in establishing fairness, humanity and dignity at the centre of the UK's immigration policy. There are important advances in GMB policy in this motion particularly calling for the repeal of the Tory Government's immigration laws. The problem we face on using legality as a test of fairness is that laws do not permit fairness, dignity, nor a humane approach. They were written by Tories. The immigration policies, much written by Tories but also contributed to by Labour Governments, have contributed to discriminating against all migrants and their children. The GMB needs to oppose the institutional racism of both the state and the Home Office, whose boastful publication of their legislative proposals and deportation activities must be deplored. The noting of Labour's backtracking on the hostile environment and the persistence of the NHS charge and the call for safe and legal routes for asylum seekers are important policy goals, and important improvements in the case of legal routes, for GMB policy. I am shocked but not surprised (if that makes sense) that again we talk about fighting Reform without talking about their racism, and permit a Labour Government front bench to copy their rhetoric and many of their immigration policies. The far right and racism will not be defeated by triangulation and copying Reform. Their ideas need to be confronted and shunned. These ideas have no place in the Labour movement and that includes on a Labour front bench. I call on Congress to support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Dave. Secunder?

STELLA IKANIK (London): Vice-President, Congress. I am here to second this vital motion for a fair and humane immigration policy with the CEC's qualification. Congress, let's be clear, the hostile environment has not just failed, it has devastated lives. The Illegal Immigration Act, the Nationality and Border Act and the health surcharge have criminalised vulnerability, punished the innocent and made it harder for migrants to live with dignity. GMB has long stood for justice, equality and human rights. This motion continues that tradition, demanding safe and legal routes, the right to work, the right to reunite with family, and an end to policies that keep people in limbo and fear.

I fully support this motion but I also accept the CEC's important qualification. We must ensure the call to end immigration raids, detentions and deportation, specifically to those who seek safety, not harm. This is about building an immigration system rooted in fairness not fear; a system that protects the vulnerable while maintaining public confidence. Congress, let's send a clear message, GMB believes in humanity over hostility, in dignity over detention and in solidarity over scapegoating. Congress, I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Stella. Does anyone wish to oppose the motions? Does London accept the qualification on 227? (*Agreed*) Sorry, Donna, I am doing it again, I am trying to get finished for Wednesday!

DONNA SPICER (CEC): I know you want me to get stop me from getting up and

speaking, Malcolm, but I am doing it on behalf of us lot! President, Congress, responding to Motion 227 and 228, which we are supporting with qualifications. CEC welcomes these motions which reaffirm GMB's long-standing solidarity with refugees and migrants, and much of what they call for in our existing GMB policy. GMB supports the full repealing of measures which criminalise migration or living in the UK as a migrant. Both motions help reaffirm GMB's opposition to the hostile environment against migrants, many of whom have long called the UK home. They also reaffirm our demand that asylum seekers should not be treated as criminals or unlawfully held in detention centres. Their fundamental human rights must be defended including the right to work in the UK.

Motion 228 also reaffirms policy carried by Congress 2024 that we support the UK pursuing agreements with other countries to give reciprocal rights to travel, live, work and study without a visa. The CEC's only qualification is to clarify that Motion 227's call for no forced or coercive removals of Syrians and Motion 228's call to end migration raids, detentions and deportations should not be read as a call for the UK to have no immigration controls at all. Congress, these are small but important qualifications for the record. Existing Congress policy is that as part of a humanitarian system some immigration controls are needed to prevent those who intend to cause harm to the UK from entering. These qualifications help to ensure that the GMB continues to advocate for a progressive immigration policy based on fairness, humanity and dignity for all migrants. It helps us to expose Reform's divisive rhetoric on migration for what it is. GMB continues to proudly welcome solidarity with refugees and reaffirms our commitments to opposing the hostile environment, to seek repeal of the Nationality and Borders Act and support a humane immigration policy that enables

legal routes for those seeking asylum to enter and stay in the country and be reunited with their families. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 227 and 228 with the qualifications that I have set out. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Does London accept the qualification on 227 and 228? (*Agreed*)
All those in favour of 227 and 228, please show. Any against? They are carried.

*Motion 227 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 228 was **CARRIED**.*

Employment Policy: Equality & Inclusion

THE CO-CHAIR: Can I ask now for the movers of Motions 76 and 77, the mover of Composite 6 and the mover of Motion 89 to please come to the front and the mover of Motion 76 to the rostrum.

NORTHERN IRELAND EQUALITY LEGISLATION

MOTION 76

76. NORTHERN IRELAND EQUALITY LEGISLATION

This Congress is concerned that colleagues in Northern Ireland are falling behind in terms of employment and equality legislation and calls on the GMB to lobby the NI Executive to remedy this as soon as possible by ensuring that outstanding legislation is enacted urgently.

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Referred)

RACHEL BURGIN (London): Good afternoon, Congress. B33 BMA Branch. First-time delegate, first-time-speaker. (*Applause*) I am moving Motion 76 on Northern Ireland Equalities Legislation on behalf of B33 BMA branch. This motion criticises the Northern Ireland Executive for being behind the rest of the UK on employment and equalities legislation. I speak today as a proud member of the Glenn family of Londonderry, a family that produced peace campaigner George Glenn and the equalities campaigner Stephen Glenn. But I also stand as a London delegate with an English accent and in that context I speak with humility.

My political journey was profoundly impacted by my childhood visits to Northern Ireland. I learnt from an incredibly early age the power of politics to change people's lives, for both good and ill, but I also know how incredibly important it is for people to be able to look to the future with optimism. In this spirit, I wholeheartedly support the decision to refer this to our colleagues in the North West & Irish Region. That said there are some issues I would like to draw to the attention of Congress. One thing I did appreciate growing up is that the legacy of the Troubles has shaped the political settlement and that sometimes still prioritises constitutional questions and tribalism over economic, social or legislative progress. When politicians refuse to work together, and Stormont does not meet, it causes serious delays to the legislative programme. A good example of this is the Northern Ireland Executive Strategy on Racism, which ran from 2015 to 2025, with the aim of eradicating racism and hate crime in the Province. This strategy concluded with a review which stated that progress had been undermined by lack of budget and action plan. This lack of progress was attributed to the absence of a power-sharing Government at Stormont which had created a governance and

political vacuum for racial equality to be supported during that period. So the next time you see a Northern Irish politician grandstanding in front of the cameras about refusing to work in a power-sharing executive at Stormont, just remember whilst they are doing that, they are not passing equalities legislation.

The second issue relates to the Good Friday Agreement, which sometimes itself gets used to prevent progress on equality such as when the DUP used the Petition of Concern to block progress on LGBT equality, using a provision that was intended to ensure cross-community consensus to enforce conservative evangelical doctrine on Northern Irish citizens who do not necessarily subscribe to it. I want to reiterate my wholehearted support for the CEC's decision to enable our Northern Irish colleagues to lead on this work. As we often say in so very many contexts: nothing about us, without us. Thank you. *(Applause)*

EQUAL PAY

MOTION 77

77. EQUAL PAY

GMB continues the fight to get pay justice for women who have been victims of wage discrimination. Winning these collective cases is life changing for the impacted women and often also for their families. Financial redress means more than just cash, it means freedom to choose, time and self worth.

However equal pay is still misunderstood by many. GMB should be using every possible tool to explain, highlight and build the campaign. As well as righting the wrongs of the past, we must move to ensure that these wage injustices cannot ever happen again.

Congress resolves

- To ask all branches to consider whether there may be an equal pay campaign locally as part of their branch development plan.
- To produce guidance on how to ensure all future negotiated policies on pay, terms and conditions are cross referenced with equal pay legislation and best practice.
- To develop a series of video shorts on equal pay, from a brief introduction, Equal Pay FAQ's, through to case studies of the impact on GMB members lives, to how to join the campaign. These shorts should be available for local comms use as well as on national social channels.

S38 SHEFFIELD MUN AND LT. BRANCH

NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Rachel. Secunder? *(Formally seconded)* Thank you. Mover of 77, please.

MAJLINDA PERLESI (North East, Yorkshire & Humberside): Good afternoon President, Congress. Sheffield Local Authority Branch and a part of the great big North East, Yorkshire & Humberside. *(Cheers)* This is my first time and my first speech. *(Applause)* And I am not gonna lie, it is not going to be my last one either! I want to start off by saying I have had a few of my colleagues ask me if I am nervous. I am looking at them and I am saying no, not through confidence but for what I believe in I am not going to be nervous. The reason I am not nervous is because I believe in the things that I am standing here for. The motion that I want everyone to support is not just about justice, not just about fairness, not just about dignity, it is about all of them, and equality and equal pay. Therefore, I stand here for equal pay.

I am first of all a proud GMB member, and I am proud to stand here today as a GMB convener. I am even prouder to stand here leading the Sheffield Campaign for Equal Pay for Women. (*Applause*) The reason I stand here today is because I know the power that we hold if we all stand together, by listening to our members and their concerns and hearing them, but also by feeling their pain and empowering them. I have promised that we are going to deliver the pay justice they deserve for women in Sheffield and hopefully all the UK. As I sat with members in tears I read pay slips that do not match the hours, the effort. The dignity that our members deserve I fought for, and I will continue to fight for. I do not just campaign when it is easy. I campaign when it is uncomfortable, and sometimes it is really serious challenges. I came close to dismissal but I refused to stop fighting pay injustice and I refused to stay quiet. If standing up for equal rights makes me a target, then so be it. (*Applause*) I refuse to stay quiet when the injustice is so loud. This motion matters to me, not just in principle but in practice, because our members are watching and they are asking, “Does my member have my back? Does my member believe that I should get the right pay and the same pay as my colleagues?” Do we have to answer that? Yes, not just with action but also with applause. Equal pay is not a new demand. We have marched for it, we have struggled for it, we legislated for it, but we all know there are still gaps in some sectors, and it is growing. Some of the women across our membership who are delivering, are showing up, are all underpaid, and what happens when they are underpaid, the men, the brothers, the fathers, they all have to step up and work extra? Because this is about a basic sense of fairness and human beings, it is not just thinking about yourself. It is about thinking about your neighbour who cannot afford to buy school uniforms. It is about the grandmothers in their 40s who do not want to retire or cannot afford to retire. And it is about the nurse next door who cannot afford to pay for her heating, yet she is still

serving us. This motion is about making equal pay mandatory, by pushing transparency, by ensuring consequences when an employer does not comply, because if we do not make demands then, when shall we?

So, let me make this crystal clear. This is not a motion for me. It is my fight, it is our fight and it is GMB's fight, all together. So let's not back down, let's not delay, let's pass this motion. We stand and we will not stop until equal pay is a reality.

THE CO-CHAIR: Colleague, please wind up.

MAJLINDA PERLES: Thank you very much. I move. (*A standing ovation*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Secunder Motion 77?

ANGELA CURTIS (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, President, Congress. I am from the great big region of North East Region. First-time-speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, I have had quite a range of jobs since becoming a union member. I have worked in pubs pulling pints. I have been an Asda retail worker serving my legal community. I have been a prison officer dealing with challenging individuals. And today I am working for Durham County Council working directly with children who have been placed in a secure residential unit. Throughout these 18 years two things have been consistent. First, my role as a GMB rep supporting members on the front-line and, secondly, that I keep running into the issue of equal pay. I am among the Asda workers who has an equal pay claim lodged with the union; a battle that has been going

on for years, and today I find myself in a second fight, campaigning for pay justice for women workers in local authorities.

Wherever I have worked I have seen wage discrimination and like thousands of Asda workers and thousands of council workers I am determined to end this abuse. Equal pay is a huge fight and something we must all, wherever we work, take seriously. So, Congress, please vote to support this motion and send a message to those women standing up for what is right that they will have the full weight of the GMB behind them and also send the message to each and every employer that if they discriminate against female workers then the GMB is coming for them. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thanks, Angela. Mover of Composite 6. Composite 5. It has got 6 here.

BETTER WORKPLACE RIGHTS AND PROTECTION FOR WORKERS UNDERGOING IVF AND FERTILITY TREATMENT

COMPOSITE MOTION 5

Covering Motions

83. Rights for Workers Receiving IVF Treatment – Wales & South West Region

84. Protection and Better Rights for Employees Undergoing IVF - Midlands Region

85. Workplace Policy for Fertility Treatment - Southern Region

86. Fertility Leave – North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

C5. BETTER WORKPLACE RIGHTS AND PROTECTION FOR WORKERS UNDERGOING IVF AND FERTILITY TREATMENT

This Congress supports that in the UK, workers have a limited amount of statutory rights but the right to time off when going through IVF is not one of them.

This Congress notes that one in every seven couples have difficulty conceiving, yet very few employers have a formal policy concerning fertility treatment. This means that many employees going through such treatment do not have either the understanding or support from their employer about what this involves. Over 50,000 individuals a year in the UK undertake fertility treatment.

For many this is an emotionally and physically demanding journey. Despite this there are very few legal protections for those undertaking treatment.

Without proper understanding and support, the physical, mental and financial stresses of fertility treatment often lead to increased sick leave.

This congress calls upon the GMB to advocate for enhanced workplace protections and rights for employees undergoing In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatment. Currently, individuals undergoing IVF do not receive the same level of support and accommodations as those who are pregnant, despite the significant physical, emotional, and financial challenges associated with the treatment. It is imperative that we address this gap to ensure that all employees have the necessary support to balance their reproductive health needs with their professional responsibilities. IVF treatment often requires multiple medical appointments, procedures, and recovery periods, which can be difficult to manage alongside work commitments. Without adequate support, employees may face undue stress and potential discrimination.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 provides a framework for fertility treatment in the UK, but it does not specifically address workplace rights for those undergoing IVF. Recent changes in legislation, such as the extension of storage periods for eggs, sperm, and embryos, highlight the evolving nature of fertility treatment laws.

However, there is a clear need for workplace policies that provide flexibility and protection for employees during this challenging time. In too many workplaces discussions about fertility treatment are seen as taboo or outside of the scope of employment practice, resulting in people feeling unable to disclose what they are experiencing, and consequently suffering.

In 2024, a report by Totaljobs and the Fawcett Society, showed that one in five workers who have undergone fertility treatment quit their job because of the way they were treated during the process. It shouldn't be the case that workers have to choose between their job and their wish for a child. The report also found that the emotional well-being of women is more likely to be impacted than men, and this increases for women on low-incomes and single women. Infertility is a recognised medical condition, so there should be no stigma or discrimination for anyone undergoing fertility treatment. Whilst employers often offer paid medical leave for IVF appointments very few have progressive policies that cover the breadth of the fertility journey. The lack of fertility rights policies means that many women are forced to take annual or unpaid leave for treatment symptoms, and as with miscarriage, there is no automatic right to time off for a failed treatment despite the emotional and physical difficulty it can produce. We feel that a worker who has been unfortunate enough to have to use costly fertility treatment to be able to have the opportunity to have a child should be supported as a national right when doing so. We call for GMB to campaign and use influence on this issue to ensure workers who are going through IVF treatment can have the required time off and not suffer a detriment to do so. We would like for GMB to work with employers to negotiate policies and procedures to ensure that these workers are supported by their workplace. Congress Resolves

- To develop a model fertility rights policy and distribute across the Union.
- the GMB should campaign for the introduction of specific workplace protections for employees undergoing IVF. This includes paid leave for medical appointments, protection against discrimination, and the provision of reasonable adjustments to work schedules.

- To work with other campaigning groups to launch a national fertility rights campaign, that includes developing a best practice guide, fertility rights charter and campaign resources for reps looking to negotiate locally.
- To lobby MPs and the Labour Government to introduce fertility rights legislation during this parliament, so that all employers have a policy on infertility that shows both flexibility and compassion. Anyone going through fertility treatment should, at the very least, be entitled to paid time off to attend appointments, as well as partners given leave to attend with them, as well as paid compassionate/bereavement leave, when necessary.
- To champion those unionised employers and union reps who are the leaders in the fight for fertility rights in union campaign materials.

In conclusion, By advocating for these changes, we can ensure that all employees are treated with dignity and respect, and are supported in their journey towards parenthood.

Moving Region: Wales & South West

Seconding Region: Southern

(Carried)

GARETH LIPPIAT *(Wales & South West)*: Evening, Presidents, evening Congress, and evening to everybody watching at home. I am first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you.

Colleagues, we are not only trade unionists but we are defenders of dignity, equality and decency in the workplace, and it is in that spirit that I move this composite in support of this motion: a call for action to protect and uplift those undergoing one of the most emotionally and physically demanding journeys a person can take, the journey through fertility treatment. In the UK today statutory rights for workers are still too

few and one of the rights that is absent is the right for time off for those undergoing IVF treatment. Congress, that is not only a failing of the law but a failing of compassion. One in seven couples face difficulties conceiving. Over 50,000 people a year in this country take the difficult decision, often a painful path, of getting fertility treatment. They do this with courage and hope but without the backing of proper workplace protections. Too many must do this in silence fearing stigma or discrimination. Too many must choose between their job and their hope for a family. I can speak personally on this - I hope my wife does not kill me - because we went through fertility treatment for our twins and I can speak personally, getting time off of work together was near impossible for most of the appointments, and a lot of these appointments if you miss them you have to rebook months down the road, so it can take quite the effect on you guys. I will skip that bit. I think I just covered it with the personal bit, if I am honest. As always, the burden falls hardest on women especially those in low-income houses and single woman that cannot stand on their own. That is not what the GMB believe in, not now, not ever.

Congress, it is time to say enough. It time for the workplace to modernise. It is time to break the silence around fertility. It is time to extend the hand of solidarity to those struggling with infertility and treatment. We are calling on the GMB to lead the way. The composite has a number of tasks to develop a model, fertility right policy, to campaign for legal protections, leave for IVF appointments, anti-discrimination safeguards and reasonable adjustments, to work alongside allies and campaigning groups, to lobby the Labour Government to introduce compassionate legislation, and to celebrate those employers and union reps who already lead the way setting an example.

A SPEAKER: You have got this. (*Applause*)

GARETH LIPPIAT: I appreciate that. Congress, let's be clear, no one should have to choose between their dream of becoming a parent and their right to work, and it does feel like that a lot of the time. No one should face grief or hope alone and in silence and no one should be made to feel that the pursuit of a family is incompatible with their place of work. Let's make history, let's make workplaces compassionate. Let's make fertility rights a part of the proud legacy of the GMB. Please support. I move. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Gareth. Secunder of Composite 5, Southern.

JACK BEDDOE (Southern): Good afternoon, everyone, Madam President, seconding Composite Motion 5. I am speaking to support this motion, not just as a trade unionist but someone who believes our workplaces must reflect the real lives of the people within them. As you heard, one in seven couples in the UK have difficulty conceiving. That is not rare. It means it is our colleagues, our friends and maybe even ourselves, yet too few employers have policies in place to support those going through fertility treatment. Without understanding and support fertility treatment becomes an isolating, exhausting and financially draining process. According to a 2024 report by the Fawcett Society in Totaljobs, one in five workers left their job because of how they were treated, not because of the medical treatment but because of their employers' lack of compassion and flexibility. No one should have to choose between starting a family and keeping their job. This issue, as Gareth said, hits women hardest, especially those

on low incomes. The emotional toll is greater, the financial burden heavier and the support is so often lacking. This is not just a healthcare issue, it is a gender issue, a class issue and a dignity issue. Infertility is recognised as a medical condition and it should not be treated as a personal inconvenience. That is why the GMB must be campaigning for legislative change. We need all employers to have proper fertility policies, ones based on flexibility, compassion and fairness. This should include at a bare minimum paid time off of appointments, leave for partners to attend and paid compassionate and bereavement leave when that is needed. These are not luxuries. They are basic rights that reflect the decent and modern workplace. Let's be clear, this is not special treatment, it is fair treatment. It recognises the realities of modern families and shows humanity in how we support our members. Let's make sure that no one has to choose between the dream of a family and the job they rely on. Congress, please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Jack. Does London wish to speak on Composite 5? Come on down the mover of Motion 89.

CURRENT STATE OF UK MATERNITY PAY

MOTION 89

89. CURRENT STATE OF UK MATERNITY PAY

This Congress calls on GMB to support female workers who have created life by campaigning and using political influence to increase statutory maternity pay. Statutory maternity pay currently sits at around 41% of the national minimum wage. The previous Conservative government told us all during Furlough that we needed 80% of our wages to be able to sustain our living standards. The addition of a new life places pressure on families to find this money without the

support of government and employers. We feel that maternity leave should be paid at the national minimum wage as a minimum.

X53 MIDLAND SPECIALIST BRANCH

MIDLANDS REGION

(Carried)

JACQUELINE BURNETT-PITT (Midlands): Thank you, Chair, Vice-Chair, General Secretary, Congress, I am from the best region ever - Midlands Region. *(Applause)* I am here to move Motion 89 - Current State of UK Maternity Pay. This Congress calls on GMB to support female workers who have created life by campaigning and using political influence to increase statutory maternity pay. Statutory maternity pay sits at around 41% of the national minimum wage, which is currently £12.21 per hour for those aged 21 and over. That is the national minimum wage. Statutory maternity pay is sat at £4.99 per hour. This is an insult to female workers. Statutory maternity pay is a weekly payment made by employers to eligible employees while they are on maternity leave. It is designed to provide financial support during this period. Did you hear that? I will read that again. It is designed to provide financial support during this period. How does 4.99 provide financial support through that period ? And then what they do they look at the average earnings and then they look at which is lower and pay that for the next 33 weeks. The operative words here are “whichever is lower”. Why is this the case? The way in which maternity pay is calculated is complicated and shocking. How is a new mother or family expected to live on this minuscule amount of money, feed and clothe their families? The previous Conservative Government told us all during furlough that we needed 80% of our wages to be able to sustain our living standards so how is that different for maternity? The addition of a new life places

pressures on families to find this money without the support of the Government and employers.

This is where less fortunate families walk through the doors of my workplace and approach my staff in homelessness because they can no longer pay their rent, they can no longer feed their families. And then my members of staff have to sit there and look through and see how much housing benefit they can receive. It is embarrassing for those mothers. It is embarrassing for their partners. We feel that maternity leave should be paid at the national minimum wage as a very, very minimum. Congress, please support this motion so that the CEC can begin the long overdue work into statutory pay for maternity pay. I would also like to at Midlands Region we accept the CEC support with qualifications. Thank you, Congress. I move. (*Applause*).

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

HELEN SOMES (Midlands): Speaking in support of Motion 89 on the current state of maternity pay. The current level of maternity pay in the UK leaves mothers and their families disproportionately disadvantaged. Maternity pay falls well below the national minimum wage in real terms, placing families that are already struggling further at risk of poverty. Please support our motion to ensure fair pay for maternity leave. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Helen. Colleagues, I have just been informed that North East and Yorkshire are allowed to speak on Composite 5, so if they can come up. (*Applause*)

MAKLINDA PELOSI (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Hello again. Sheffield Local Authority Branch and let's not forget a big part of the North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region. *(Applause)*. The reason I wanted to come up here and talk about this, and, as I said, it won't be my last, so you will see me next year again, the reason is one in six couples in the UK experience fertility challenges. For many, IVF is not a choice, it is the only option to grow a family. Yet despite the physical, emotional and financial toll it takes, there remains little or no structure to workplaces. Workers are forced to navigate invasive treatment, scheduled hormone therapies, side effects and emotional distress whilst all the while pretending that nothing is happening. This is not just injustice; it is inhumane. Unlike any other medical treatment they are undergoing IVF that are often made to use annual leave, unpaid time off or sick leave, sometimes even facing judgment or discrimination in the workplace. Let's not forget the emotional trauma that everybody goes through, even staff are going through it and colleagues that are experiencing and seeing this within their work colleagues. The IVF process is unpredictable. Cycles can fail, pregnancies can be lost, which leads to bereavement. This is heartbreaking, shaming and isolating, and it is made even worse when workplaces offer no structures, no understanding and no support. This is why it is urgent we need a rebirthed workplace policy on infertility and IVF. It is not just good practice, it fosters loyalty and builds good culture and, most importantly, it tells workers, "we see you, we value you and you are not alone." So, today I hope that we can pass this motion and together we can take care of our own. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Does anyone wish to speak against any of the motions? Can I now call on Linda Carr-Pollock for the CEC qualifications.

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to Motions 76, 77, Composite 5 and Motion 89.

As Motion 76 regards an issue specific to Northern Ireland, the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred in order or members living and working in Northern Ireland to determine.

On Motion 77, the CEC supports the motion with qualification. The CEC welcomes that this motion goes further than existing policy on protecting local government funding to highlight the link between equal pay and the local government funding crisis. The qualification is that we have an existing national equal pay campaign which we encourage all local campaigns to get involved in by their regional women's campaign unit or equivalent. Our national campaign is to ensure that the two equal pay commitments that GMB secured from the Labour manifesto are turned into law in a way that matches GMB members' ambitions.

The CEC is supporting Composite 5 with a qualification. Thank you to the branches for raising the needs of workers going through fertility procedures. We fully support the principles of the motion but with the small qualification that once some further research has been undertaken on the issue and capacity in GMB's national equality department has been assessed it may be that we choose to support and promote external

campaigns such as Fertility in the Workplace rather than duplicate existing work. We also add that support for those undertaking IUI as well as IVF may needed.

Finally, Congress, on Motion 89, the CEC also supports with qualification. Our qualification is that existing GMB policy goes further than the calls of the motion, which for statutory maternity pay to be paid at a minimum of 100% of wages. Therefore the CEC is asking for London Region to agree to refer Motion 76 to Congress, to support Motion 77, Composite 5 and Motion 89 with the qualifications that I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Linda. Does London accept reference back on 76? Thank you. (*Agreed*) Does North East and Yorkshire agree the qualification on Motion 77? (*Agreed*) Do all the regions on Composite 5 agree the qualification? (*Agreed*) Midland did agree in their speech the qualification on Motion 89. All those in favour of Motion 77, please show? Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Composite 5, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 89, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 76 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 77 was **CARRIED**.*

*Composite Motion 5 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 89 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Can we have the mover of Composite 6 and the mover and seconder of 125 down to the front, please?

Employment Policy: Rights at Work

A REVIEW OF NATIONAL STATUTORY SICK PAY

COMPOSITE MOTION 6

Covering Motions:

123. A Review of National Sick Pay - London Region

124. Sick of Statutory Sick Pay - North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

C6. A REVIEW OF NATIONAL STATUTORY SICK PAY

Congress, people are hit with climbing debts they cannot pay every day and unfortunate illnesses keep them away from their jobs short or long term. It is a disgrace that the UK has the worst Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) in the developed world. Statutory sick pay is just £96 or £384 a month. For some this doesn't even pay their rent, their food, or their utility bills. At just £116.75 a week (only payable from day four) SSP works out shamefully at less than £3 an hour for a full time worker. We are in a society where reality is far from close to normal living where the cost of living is, we need to level up.

We must raise statutory sickness payments to a suitable level that helps the working class be able to cope when signed off by their doctor. A third of UK workers only receive SSP and they are overwhelmingly already the poorest paid in the country. Women, disabled, and black and minority ethnic workers are disproportionately more likely to receive SSP. More than half of the people on SSP are living in poverty.

Shockingly 1.3 million workers, often holding down multiple part time jobs (such as cleaning, lunch assistance, caring), have no access to sick pay at all. The burden on low paid workers is also effectively doubled as they are likely to work in professions that create higher risks of picking

up sickness, such as hospitality and care. Too often a vicious cycle can begin as workers force themselves back to work as soon as possible, even when they are unfit, to find the money necessary to pay the upcoming bills, thus spreading more illness, impacting upon both their and others health. You can't get better when under pressure to return to work unwell becoming a safety issue to yourself and your workplace.

To have the worst Statutory sick pay scheme in the developed world is a disgrace and the new Labour Government must taken action. We must review statutory sick pay. No one should have to try and survive below the poverty line, its about time we benefitted from paying our high-end taxes. GMB should:

Use all its political and broader campaign influence to push the Government to legislate to:

- End the waiting period for SSP: make sick pay available to all workers from day 1
- Increase the level SSP is set at for all
- Close the system gaps that mean 1.3 million workers cannot even access SSP#

Moving Region: North East, Yorkshire & Humber

Seconding Region: London Region

(Carried)

MARY BELL (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): From the great big beautiful North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region! *(Applause)* Good afternoon, President, comrades, friends and fellow colleagues. Thank you for being here, for every worker across the country who knows what it is like to be faced with an impossible choice: to go to work sick or lose a day's pay. Today we stand together to demand something simple, something fair, something that should already be a basic right: statutory sick pay from day one. Right now in 2025 it is still the case that if you fall ill you are expected to wait three days before you are entitled to a single penny in sick pay. That

is three days of no income, three days where the bills do not stop, where the rent does not stop, the food shop does not stop but your pay does. So let's be honest, Congress, for many workers, especially those on low wages, those three days might as well be a lifetime because missing even a single shift means a drop in income for people who can least afford this. We saw during the pandemic people were forced to choose between isolating or eating, between protecting their health or paying the gas bill. This was in not just unjust, it was dangerous, and yet Congress here we are years later and nothing has changed.

Let me be crystal clear, Congress: sick pay is not a luxury, it is a lifeline. The current system punishes people who need our protection most. It discourages responsible behaviour and it deepens inequality. It says your health does not matter until day four. Well, Congress, we reject that. We say that from day one a worker who falls ill should be able to take time off without fear of financial penalty.

So, Congress, here is what we demand: statutory sick pay from the first day of illness, no waiting period and no exceptions, a sick pay rate that reflects the real cost of living, not the outdated inadequate amount we have today, equal access to sick pay for all workers no matter the size of the employer or the type of contract or the hours a person works. This is not radical. It is reasonable. It is the bare minimum we should expect in a country that calls itself fair. So let us keep fighting, let us keep organising, let us keep raising our voices because when we speak together they have to listen. We are not asking for favours. We are demanding our rights, sick pay from day one. No one should be punished for being unwell. I move, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Could we have the seconder for Composite 6, please?

ADRIAN STALL (London): Seconding Composite 6 on National Sick Pay. We are moving in big circles, what with the inflation rises, rising food prices, tax rises and pretty much every bill and purchase we have encountered rising over the past 15 years. Statutory sick pay was £96 a week which from 6 April has risen to £118.75 per week. Congress, how many of you can sit back and live in today's world and today's reality? You have to wait three days before you can start claiming. Three days. Congress, you still have that bill to pay, you still must eat and you still have your family and children to look after. Bills have risen, energy bills are now at a level beyond belief. With food bills filling up trolleys full of deals is no longer possible. Congress, we are seeing people being pushed further into debt. Shoplifting is on the rise and all for what, a loaf of bread? And a loaf of bread that is needed for the kids' school lunch. We pay our taxes to help run this condition. Without us there is no sustainability, no stability and most of all no country.

Congress, I ask for a review on statutory sick pay which needs to be levelled up with regard to today's reality. The minimum wage is set for a reason and even that is not a touch on today's cost of living. So if you are off sick, how can you be expected to live on statutory sick pay? Those who cheat the system will face those consequences for their choices. Those who need it will be back to work and giving back by paying into the system. Congress, there needs to be a fairer way to support people off sick.

THE PRESIDENT: Adrian, can you wind up, please.

ADRIAN STOHR (London): Congress, a review is needed. If the minimum wage goes up in line with the cost of living then so should statutory sick pay. The living wage is rising because of the need to pay the bills ---

THE PRESIDENT: Adrian, you do need to wind up, please.

ADRIAN STOHR: I will just finish up on saying imagine being signed off work waiting for an operation for an illness and living on £118 a week. Just let that sink in again and again. Can you survive on that money? You can't. Once you pay into the system you deserve to receive the benefit.

THE PRESIDENT: Adrian, will you second, please.

ADRIAN STOHR: Congress, I support.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Finally. It is just we are going to be running a bit late so people do have to keep to time now, sorry. Do we have the mover of Motion 125, North East, Yorkshire and Humber?

MAKING DISCRETIONARY SICK PAY FAIR

MOTION 125

125. MAKING DISCRETIONARY SICK PAY FAIR

This Congress calls for GMB to campaign across employers where discretionary sick pay is in place to make sure this is a fair process. We currently have members in workplaces where it's a

face fits system as to whether anything above SSP applies. There has been a hesitance to campaign around this for fear that an employer will remove the option. We have workplaces that have systems and checks and balances in place to make sure that this process is fair and open. Congress asks that GMB explore workplaces where we have achieved these systems for our members and to use this information to build a template that can then be used to campaign and mobilise our members within their workplaces. Building and sharing our wins and best practises around this issue can only help to make work life better for our members.

R40 SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR GENERAL BRANCH

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Referred)

RON CAMERON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber) : Good afternoon, Congress. I am from Jarrow, which is part of the great big North East, Yorkshire and Humber. I am a first-time delegate *(Applause)* - I think you are falling asleep now - and a first-time speaker *(Applause)*.

So Congress, I am here to move Motion 125 - Making Discretionary Sick Pay Fair. It may not be the sexiest of motion titles but it is an issue that strikes at the very core of workers' dignity and security. The GMB always push for improvements to all workers' lives. We must always have in mind those workers who rely on fair treatment, compassion and support during times of illness. Congress, too often discretionary sick pay policies place the fate of workers' income in the hands of line managers or arbitrary company procedures; procedures which can be inconsistent, opaque and unfair. That all too frequently results in uncertainty and hardship for individuals and often it depends if your face fits. Well, Congress, we know good sick pay policies are essential not only

for protecting workers but for promoting a healthy, productive workforce. When employees trust that they will be supported when they fall ill, they are more likely to rest and recover fully reducing the spread of illness in the workplace and preventing long-term health issues. This benefits everyone, not just the employee but their families, the business and society as a whole.

Congress, the problem with discretionary sick pay is that it leaves too much room for bad employers. We should be demanding complete transparency when too often there is a mist. Workers should not have to guess whether they will receive their full pay or face financial hardship because they are ill. As a trade union our campaign is clear - absolutely clear - we must push for sick pay policies that are fair, transparent and standardised. These policies should guarantee a baseline of income protection that workers can depend on. No ifs, no buts, discretion should never be a penalty. So Congress, we could call on our employers to work with the union to establish clear criteria for sick pay that removes ambiguity and safeguards workers' well-being. We could also urge the Government and policy-makers to legislate stronger protections and prevent discretionary policies from being used as tools of discrimination or unfair treatment so in solidarity we can build a future where every worker knows that their health will never be a reason for financial insecurity. Sick pay should provide comfort and support, not stress and uncertainty.

So, let's stand firm. Consistent sick pay is an essential right that protects workers and strengthens our workplaces. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ronald. Is there a seconder for Motion 125, please?

SUE ATKINSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Supporting Motion 125. *(Applause)* Is it fair that an employer can pick and choose who gets sick pay and who doesn't? Everyone should be treated the same, not just if your face fits or you are best friends with the manager. If you are sick, the last thing you want is to have to worry if you are going to get paid or not. Your sick pay should not be a lottery. We all pay our dues to our workplace and all deserve the same chance of winning. Please support our motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue. There does not appear to be any opposition so can I ask Tracy from the CEC to give a response, please.

TRACY BEESON (CEC): President, Congress, good afternoon, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motion 125, which we are asking to be referred. The branch has helpfully explained that the motion is directed at the issue of discretionary enhanced sick pay above SSP. On occasions there are no set guidelines in contracts around the circumstances in which pay above SSP will be paid. Members who have not received enhanced sick pay have reported that in the past other members of staff, or indeed managers on occasion, have received enhanced sick pay, though this is hard to prove as employees will not provide details. The branch is calling on the union to explore the position and to campaign to ensure that all workers are treated equally and transparently. The recommended stance is to refer the motion to allow the union to explore the position and develop policy in the light of this. Discretionary arrangements may well conceal discrimination as the CEC understands sickness policies must not discriminate against employees due to the protected characteristics. For example,

someone is disabled and part-time employees should be paid the same or equivalent as full-time employees. Therefore, the CEC is asking North East, Yorkshire & Humber to agree to refer this Motion 125, thank you. (*Applause*)

*Motion 125 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracy, and can we say congratulations to Tracy on her appointment as an assistant organiser in London Region. (*Applause*) Before I go to the vote can I ask movers and seconders of movers motions 126, 127 and 128 to come down to the front, please? They are our last three motions so we are on the home straight. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept reference back on Motion 125? (*Agreed*) That does not need a vote. Composite 6 the CEC is supporting, so all those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 125 was **REFERRED**.*

*Composite Motion 6 was **CARRIED**.*

ADDRESSING INEQUITABLE TREATMENT OF WORKPLACE SICKNESS BETWEEN REMOTE-CAPABLE AND ON-SITE STAFF

MOTION 126

126. ADDRESSING INEQUITABLE TREATMENT OF WORKPLACE SICKNESS BETWEEN REMOTE-CAPABLE AND ON-SITE STAFF

Working from home is now a reality for thousands of people, but many workers don't have this option. People with front-of-house responsibilities must be physically present at work.

A concerning discrepancy has emerged between how managers and front-of-house staff are treated during periods of illness. When managers are sick, they can typically continue working from home, maintaining an unblemished attendance record. However, when front-of-house staff are ill, they cannot perform their duties remotely and must take sick leave, leading to them being disproportionately subject to workplace sickness policies.

While some may argue this is merely a local issue, or that Human Resources departments would deny such practices as they contradict existing policies, evidence suggests this discriminatory treatment is widespread. It is fundamentally unfair that a sick manager can work remotely via Teams calls and potentially participate in disciplinary proceedings against front-of-house staff who have been absent due to illness. This motion calls upon Congress to investigate this inequitable treatment and develop remedies to address this discrimination in workplace sickness policies.

B11 BARKING & DAGENHAM LGO BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Referred)

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of Motion 126, please?

MARK WATSON (London): President, Congress, speaking on Motion 126, Addressing Inequitable Treatment of Workplace Sickness Between Remote-Capable and On-site Staff. That will be explained later on. Last year one of our stewards went to a sickness meeting with a member who had been ill. She had hit one of our trigger points. The member had a job needing her to be there in person. The manager however signed on online by Teams. She had Covid but could work from home. She missed the irony of the situation completely. Covid did not create this unfairness; it showed it up. The first time I saw it was around 2020 when senior managers came back to work

with phased returns that included home working while front-line staff were denied this. Line managers can quite openly work from home while sick keeping perfect attendance records while our front-line staff face step-by-step disciplinary action for the same basic reality of human illness. Our food workers face a worse problem. With stomach bugs they are banned from work for 48 hours after symptoms stop. They must either come in sick, risking spreading illness and breaking food safety laws, or stay home and get another mark against them, pushing them towards disciplinary action and dismissal. The facts seem clear, front-line workers have sickness absence rates of about 2.9% whilst managers record just 1.3%. We have created a system where honesty is punished and lying is rewarded, where the same symptoms lead to very different results based only on whether you can work from home. The HR will almost certainly claim this unfairness does not exist and that is because it is not meant to happen like this according to their policies, but anonymous sickness records will show the truth. You cannot hide a broken leg but you can hide colds, flus, minor sprains and infections - the list goes on. I have also been told that managers would object to fixing this unfairness, but since when does workplace fairness depend on management approval? We are not trying to restrict remote working. We are demanding fairness. If managers can work from home while sick without penalty, why should staff who cannot, be punished? The answer is simple: Front-line staff need either extra sick leave or different treatment before disciplinary steps begin. This should especially apply in jobs where certain symptoms legally require complete work exclusion. Workers who cannot hide illness through remote work deserve protection and not punishment. This is systematic unfairness dressed up as business need. The evidence shows front-line workers are more likely to be absent than management. The question is simple: are managers actually healthier or

is this just a trick of the eye created by remote working privilege? Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. Secunder for Motion 126, please?

GAVIN DOWNEY (London): Seconding Motion 126. Congress, our members who work on the front-line are being unfairly penalised compared to their counterparts who can work from home. Many companies' sickness policy does not account for the people who work from home who can continue to work while ill. These people will have a good sickness record. Staff who are customer facing will need to take time off while sick and this will be detrimental to our members who will be called into sickness review meetings with their managers. This motion calls on the GMB to investigate this discrepancy within the workplace and to formulate a response. I urge Congress to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

IMPROVING BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

MOTION 127

127. IMPROVING BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

We have seen many hard won workplace benefits eroded in recent years, through all industries and sectors throughout the UK, but GMB has collectively tirelessly fought to retain and improve the terms and conditions of contracts. We haven't always been successful in our efforts. The hire and rehire tactics used by Asda, being one of our defeats, it is welcome that this nefarious practice is heading towards the history books, due to a Labour government. As a movement, we have helped bring Labour to power and for that, we can rightly be proud of ourselves. Whilst we often challenge Asda, there is one benefit that is very much appreciated by colleagues and praised by

many outside and within the retail sector as being an example for the good bereavement leave.

There is no right for paid time off under current legislation and unpaid bereavement time off is down to the discretion of your manager, boss, whoever has power over you in the workplace.

At Asda, the policy is as follows:

2 weeks paid leave for the loss of a mother, father, spouse, child or civil partner, and 1 weeks paid leave for other relatives, with positive exceptions for when other relatives were primary care giver as a child. This is done on a no questions asked basis, on a mutual trust that the benefit won't be exploited. Its given at full contracted pay rate. Credit is due to Asda for this. Legally Statutory bereavement paid leave only applies for parents who have lost a child under the age of 18. That is it. No one else within the family. Neither your wife, husband, civil partner, father, mother sister, brother, all other relatives. Not only that, bereavement leave is paid at only £187.08 a week, for 2 weeks or 90% of your weekly wage, whichever is lower. Following the loss of any other relatives or partner, you have to ask for leave that is down to another's discretion. This is simply not right. When reading through the governments website advice on bereavement, or the ACAS guide, you will not find clear absolute guidance. Rather lots of use of the words are 'should' and 'may', with lots of expectations on employers to show compassion, understanding, empathy. But these are just words, these do not reflect the reality of how it is for employees who have to go and ask for compassionate leave and hope for understanding whilst having no automatic right, other than the derisory law in place for the loss of a child; Bereavement law needs to be improved. Asda does more than follow the law, it has put into place an excellent policy that shows how indifferent and inadequate the present UK law is at present. GMB should be campaigning for decent bereavement law for all. Including statutory, full pay for all those who have suffered the loss of a close relative or partner, of at least two weeks.

A13 BRANCH

NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Referred)

THE PRESIDENT: Mover of Motion 127? That will fall if nobody comes to the front.

Can you come to the rostrum then, please, the mover of Motion 127. *(Formally moved)*

That helps, thank you very much. Then formally seconding, yes? *(Formally seconded)*

CAMPAIGN FOR ENHANCED EQUALITY BEREAVEMENT RIGHTS AND EMPLOYER STANDARDS

MOTION 128

128. CAMPAIGN FOR ENHANCED EQUALITY BEREAVEMENT RIGHTS AND EMPLOYER STANDARDS

This union believes:

1. Bereavement leave is a vital right for workers, allowing them to grieve, make practical arrangements, and recover emotionally after the loss of loved ones.
2. Existing statutory bereavement leave policies are often insufficient and fail to address the diverse cultural, familial, and emotional needs of workers.
3. Workers in precarious employment, low-income roles, or non-traditional family structures (e.g., LGBTQ+ families, migrant workers, and chosen families) face unique challenges in accessing adequate bereavement leave.
4. Compassionate and inclusive bereavement policies contribute to workplace equality, emotional well-being, and productivity.

This union resolves to:

1. Advocate for Legislative Improvements
 - Campaign for legal reforms to strengthen bereavement leave entitlements, including:
 - Extending statutory leave periods to better accommodate workers' needs.

- Expanding eligibility to include chosen families, close friends, and culturally significant relationships.
 - Guaranteeing paid bereavement leave to ensure financial stability during periods of loss.
 - Recognising cultural and personal mourning practices by allowing flexible leave options.
2. Launch a Campaign for Enhanced Employer Standards
- Promote a public campaign urging employers to adopt progressive bereavement leave policies, including:
 - Longer, fully paid bereavement leave.
 - Flexible leave arrangements to address personal and familial needs over time.
 - Additional support services such as counselling, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and mental health resources.
 - Publicly recognise employers who lead by example with compassionate bereavement policies to encourage wider adoption of best practices.
3. Empower Members and Build Awareness
- Provide training, guidance, and resources for union representatives to negotiate improved bereavement leave provisions in workplaces.
 - Collect and share stories from workers to illustrate the need for better bereavement policies and their impact on well-being and workplace equity.
 - Run awareness campaigns to educate workers about their rights and how to advocate for enhanced bereavement leave.
4. Build Broader Solidarity and Partnerships
- Collaborate with mental health organisations, community groups, and other unions to amplify advocacy for compassionate bereavement leave.

- Organise public events, petitions, and outreach campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive bereavement policies.

This union further resolves to champion bereavement leave as a fundamental workers' right, ensuring that all workers receive fair, compassionate, and culturally sensitive support during times of loss.

K19 SOUTH LONDON GENERAL BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Referred)

THE PRESIDENT: The mover of Motion 128, please?

LISA EDWARDS (Southern): *(Applause)* Chair, Congress, I rise today to speak in full support of Motion 128 - Campaign for Enhanced Equality Bereavement Rights and Employer Standards. This is not just a policy issue. It is personal to me. Just a few weeks ago I lost my sister-in-law. My family is travelling to Jamaica on 16th June for her funeral but I will not be going with them, not because I do not want to, not because it would not help me grieve but because I fear my employer would not understand and would not see it was valid because she was not considered immediate family by policy. Because culturally, emotionally, spiritually, none of that matters on a form. This is a reality of so many of our members across this country. When we talk about bereavement we are not just talking about leave on a policy paper. We are talking about grief, about love, about honour, and about how many communities, every culture, every family, every faith mourns in its own deep personal and profound meaningful way. In the Caribbean and African communities, mourning is not just a one-day event; it is a process often lasting nine nights or more, where people gather, share food, play music,

prayers and stories. It is how we begin to heal. In the Muslim tradition burial must happen quickly. The mourning includes days of prayers and community support. Time that cannot wait for HR approval. In the Cypriot and the Chinese cultures there are various rituals rooted in ancestries and family duty; traditions that should be respected not rushed. Let's not forget our Irish brothers and sisters where with the wake, the story-telling, the songs, the community, mourning can stretch over days. It is not just about saying goodbye; it is about honouring life. But what do we get in return from current policy? A few statutory days if you are lucky, and often for immediate family, husbands, partners and children. If you are a low-paid or a zero-hour contractor or in insecure work you might not get any time at all. You might have to choose between grieving your loved one or keeping your job. And what about the LGBTQ+ families, the migrant workers choosing families who do not fit the nuclear definition on a company handbook. Too often their grief is invisible, their loss does not qualify, their pain is written out of the rules. Congress, this is not equality, this is not compassion: this is not good enough. Bereavement should not be a privilege for those who can afford it. It should be a right for everyone. The motion is more than a demand for more days off. It is a call to change the culture of how we treat people in their darkest moments. It is about recognising that grief is diverse, just like our union, just like our members. It is about dignity in death and respect for the living. We are calling for employers to do better, to lead with compassion not convenience, to understand that grief that does not fit in a tick box, to offer flexible leave, fully paid, and no workers left struggling emotionally and financially. We are calling on ourselves as a union to lead the way, to empower our reps to negotiate better policies. Let us be the union that doesn't just fight for pay and conditions, but for dignity, for compassion, for equality, even in death. Let us honour our dead by fitting for the living. Congress, support this

motion, support inclusion, support humanity, support our members in their time of greatest need. I move the motion. Make Work Better! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Perfect timing, Lisa. Our condolences to you, but also our congratulations to another GMB member who is now an assistant organiser in Southern Region. (*Applause*) A seconder for Motion 128. (*Formally seconded*) Anybody speaking in opposition? No. Can I ask Colin Gunter from the CEC to respond?

COLIN GUNTER (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motions 126, 127 and 128.

On Motion 126 the CEC is asking the region to agree to refer the motion. This is in line with the call to investigate the position and put forward appropriate proposals. Commonly called hybrid working in a post Covid 19 pandemic environment, the practice raises a number of issues that need to be addressed and policy developed for a GMB voice on this issue.

On Motion 127 and on Motion 128, the CEC is also asking for the regions to agree to refer these motions as there are good proposals in both motions that should be explored further. Statutory parental bereavement leave was introduced in 2020, but there is no statutory entitlement to leave following the death of any close family member or partner. The Employment Rights Bill currently going through Parliament will address a non-parental statutory right to bereavement leave. Labour has also committed to a review of the parental leave system within its first year of Government. Some employers have embraced the issue but there is clearly a lot more work that needs to be

done in this area and the recommendation is to refer the motion as there are good proposals in both motions that should be explored further. Therefore, the CEC is asking the London Region to agree to refer Motion 126, the North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region to agree to refer Motion 127 and the Southern Region to agree to refer Motion 128. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Colin. Does London Region agree to refer? (*Agreed*) Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber agree to refer? (*Agreed*) And Southern Region, do you agree to refer? (*Agreed*) Thank you. That means because they are all agreed to refer back there is no need to take a vote.

*Motion 126 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 127 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 128 was **REFERRED**.*

Announcements

THE PRESIDENT: That concludes our motions for today, but before I end Congress I have some announcements and then one last piece of business of international solidarity. Just some announcements. Apparently the GMB Manufacturing stand in the exhibition hall has a missing raffle prize. The missing item is a model JCB sports car. If anyone has taken this by mistake please can you return it to the stand. Secondly, Congress, just a reminder that the President's welcome event is tonight. It starts at 9 o'clock so you do get time to go away and have some food because there will only be nibbles at the event and the venue is in auditorium 2 in this venue and the entrance will

be via the back of this building on Russell Road. I do hope to see as many of you there as possible.

We also have a delegation from Moorcroft Pottery, who are in the visitors section. Moorcroft's factory went into administration four weeks ago, so can we please welcome them and show them our solidarity. They are up there. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: It is good to see you. Thank you for coming to Congress. Congress, before we conclude today's business I would like to ask our GMB Convenor at Nestlé, Robert Battle, to come to the stage. Delegates who have come to Congress before may remember that our Nestlé Convenors brought an emergency motion in solidarity with their fellow Nestlé workers in Columbia which remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a trade unionist.

GMB is proud to work with Justice for Columbia which promotes peace and trade union rights after decades of civil war in the country.

Through Justice for Columbia, we have developed strong links with sister unions, SINALTRAINAL and the CUT union federation, whose youth organiser Lina Montilla Diaz addressed our Congress last year.

Sadly, one of our union brothers in that union Walberto Quintero Medina was killed last month and we have asked Robert to move a tribute to Walberto.

ROBERT BATTELL (London): Thank you, President Congress. My name is Robert

Battell. I am from the London Region, I am not a delegate but it is the first time I am speaking. *(Applause)* I am a GMB convenor at Nestlé factory in Sudbury. As you may know, Nestlé is a huge multinational employer with factories, workers and union reps just like us organising in Nestlé all over the world. These reps organise and campaign publicly just like we do. They spend their working lives campaigning to defend members and fight for fairness, just like we do. But Congress, we do not expect that to cost our lives, and neither should they. Columbia remains one of the world's deadliest countries to trade unionists. Years of armed conflict there have made trade unions the target of violence from right-wing paramilitary groups. Over 3,000 trade unionists were murdered since 1971, and while there is a peace agreement and a Government committed to peace-building and trade unionism, the situation remains fragile. In 2018 trade unionists at one of Nestlé factories were murdered while fighting union recognition. In response, GMB national convenors passed a motion at Congress to support their union Sinal Trainal. We demanded that Nestlé recognise the union and do more to protect their workers from violence.

Sadly, just over a month ago, our union brother and Regional Vice-President of Central, Walberto Quintero Medina was murdered while out with friends. He was shot five times by a hit man on a motorcycle. He was just 40 years old. Walberto had given his working life to organising food workers at Nestlé while he was employed. He also gave his time to organise the Colombian's national trade union federation, CUT. His murder comes as hostile acts towards trade unionists in Columbia are on the rise again. This includes smears in the media about our union sister Lina Montilla Diaz from the CUT, who addressed our Congress last year in Bournemouth. Shortly before Walberto's murder, our affiliated solidarity campaign Justice for Columbia informed him that UK

Nestlé lay convenors were standing in solidarity with his union as they fight forced dismissals for workers for raising safety concerns. We are glad that Walberto was able to know this before he died.

In his memory we step up the fight for justice and peace for trade unionists in Columbia. We have written to the UK Government to raise Walberto's murder and threats to Lina and demand more action to protect trade unionists and peace-building activities in Columbia.

Congress, please support the trade union brothers and sisters in Columbia, while supporting the Justice for Columbia campaign. For now though, please can I ask Congress to stand, if they can, while observing a minute's silence in memory of comrade Walberto Quintero which will be followed by a short video from Sinal Trainal. May he rest in power! *(Minute's silence observed) (Video shown) (A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robert, for making that moving tribute to Walberto, just one of many trade unionists who have been killed in Columbia and around the world. Robert, our thanks to you for making that speech. It is a sad note to end on I know, but thank you for today's contribution and debates.

Apologies to the regions for the mix-up this afternoon. It was down to a typing error, that is all, and that just shows you how these things go, we send our apologies. Tomorrow morning it is 9 o'clock I am afraid but hope to see you tonight at the President's do. Thank you, again. *(Applause)*

Congress adjourned.